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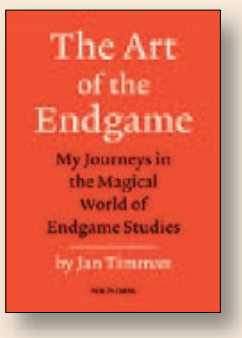

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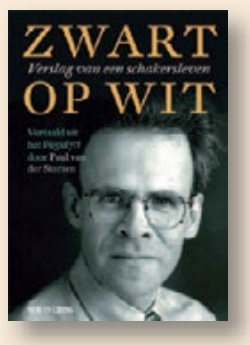

7

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by Paul van der Sterren

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3

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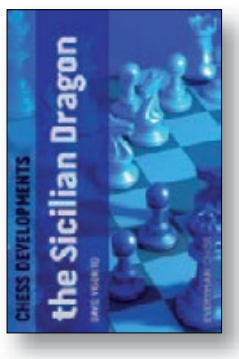

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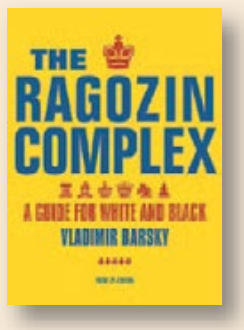

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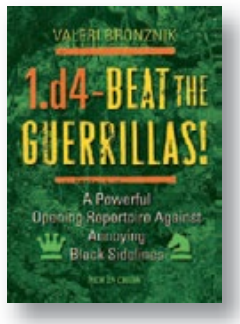

10

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2012 Issue 1

NEW IN CHESS

PUBLISHER: Allard Hoogland EDITORS-IN-CHIEF: Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam, Jan Timman

6 NIC's Café

9 Your Move

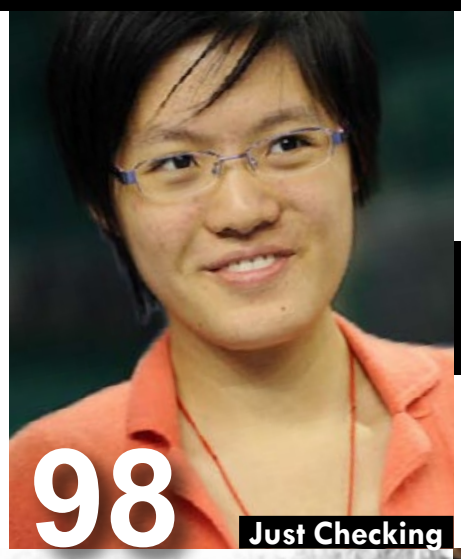
12 Kramnik Lets England Shake
In the third edition of the London Chess Classic, the English players had a hard time of it. At the end of nine hard-fought rounds, the total score between 'the World' and 'England' was a telling 15-5. A prominent part in the massacre was played by overall winner Vladimir Kramnik, who notched up a clean 4-0 against the hosts to mark an inspired comeback after his poor result in the Tal Memorial.

32 Interview Vladimir Kramnik
The former World Champ speaks openly about his ambitions, the incredible stability of Magnus Carlsen, the upcoming Anand-Gelfand match, his attitude towards Garry Kasparov, the political situation in Russia and much more.

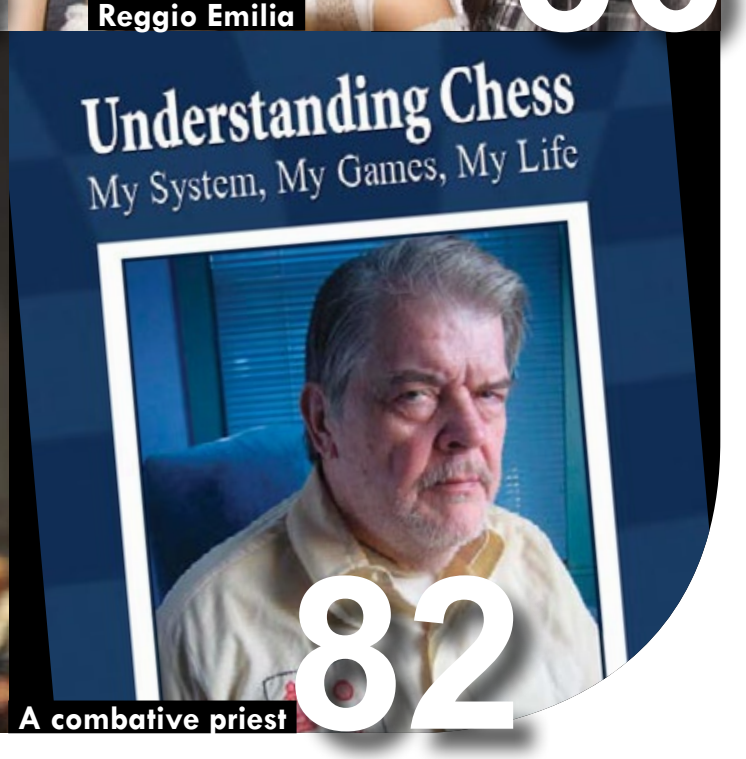
42 A Move that Made it into the Movies
Mihail Marin unravels the mystery of a star move that had a brief film career.

50 Two Games and Twice the Fun
Celebrating the legendary tournaments of 1911 and 1912, the San Sebastian New Year's festival introduced the 'Basque System', a knock-out format in which every round consists of two games played simultaneously, one with the white and one with the black pieces.

'You can see this recent tendency. There are hardly any games that are won in the opening. Even when you're playing a lower-rated player, you just don't catch him anymore. Basically these days you have to win a game with your other qualities, with your playing qualities.' – Vladimir Kramnik



COLOPHON p.6
SUBSCRIPTIONS p.94



64 Don't Fear the Reaper
Nigel Short muses about the effects of advancing age on a chess player.

66 The Caretaker's Son
Of all the World Champions, Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian is perhaps the most underrated. Genna Sosonko remembers and portrays the legendary Armenian, a complex character with a fabulous talent for the game.

77 Hertan's Forcing Moves

78 The Art of the Composer
Luke McShane found the subtitle of Jan Timman's new book, 'My Journeys in the Magical World of Endgame Studies', well chosen.

82 A Combative Priest
A film, a book and the fate of books in general inspired Hans Ree to some rambling observations.

86 Giri Strikes in Reggio
Jan Timman closely followed the events in Reggio Emilia. 'You could feel the ambition bubbling from the very start.'

98 Just Checking
What is Hou Yifan's greatest fear?

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE
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Martha Fierro, David Llada
COVER PHOTO
Vladimir Kramnik: New In Chess

NIC's Café

Let the Games Begin

For those who believe that FIDE is an ineffective organization, the eagerly awaited 2012 Candidates' tournament is a case in point. The bidding procedure for this eight-player double round-robin that will determine the challenger for the World Championship in 2013, will close on January 31st 2012. When that deadline has expired, the bids received will be opened. Within 20(!) days after opening the envelopes, the bidding parties will be informed of the result and within another 10 days the final contract with the successful bidder will be signed. For those who wonder when the Candidates' tournament is expected to take place, the 'proposed exact dates of the event' should be 'in the last quarter of 2012'. So on March 1st, eight of our absolute top players can begin to decide on their schedule for the last quarter of the year. Or rather, given the importance of the event, the last five to six months of the year. What's more, the same goes for some of the best tournaments on the calendar, such as the Tal Memorial and the London Chess Classic. They, too, have to wait till March 1st before they know which players can be invited. This is one of the reasons why the Moscow organizers are already thinking of moving the Tal Memorial to August.

Obviously, the apparent indifference with which the world chess federation treats their best players and organizers is beyond comprehension. Why don't they try to emulate the IOC, the organization they so badly want to be part of? The dates of the 2012 Olympic Summer Games in London have been known for years!

Making Progress

Talking about FIDE and the IOC, you may remember that some months ago we included a little expose in these pages about the chances of chess becoming an Olympic sport (New In Chess 2011/6). The starting point was Kirsan Ilyumzhinov's claim that 'following on from our longstanding consultations with the IOC and its Head, Mr. Jacques Rogge, it has become clear that we have good chances, but we need active support from the national federations and Olympic Committees.' The bottom line was that we contacted the IOC to hear their thoughts on this matter and received the unambiguous answer that 'chess is not eligible for admission to the Programme and the IOC's position has not changed since 2002.' We received several reactions, but there was no comment by FIDE.

Paraguayan support for Ilyumzhinov.

Still, some progress was made. A news item about a visit of the FIDE president to Paraguay was headed by the words 'Request of Paraguay to include chess to the Olympic Games Programme', but in the article itself the phrasing was slightly different: 'Later the President had a working meeting in the National Olympic Committee of Paraguay. Mr. Camilo Perez Lopez Moreira, President of the Paraguayan NOC, has signed a letter to Mr. Rogge with a request *to change the Charter* of the International Olympic Committee and to include chess to the Winter Olympic Games Programme.'

Leaving aside the question of whether chess would make an interesting Olympic sport, we understand that the mere connection between our game and the IOC would bring many chess federations essential financial support, as it already does in many countries. Still, that wish is no excuse for misrepresenting the actual situation. A visitor to our café with good connections in FIDE tried to explain the situation. Of course there is a general understanding in FIDE that under Rogge chess will not join the Olympic Programme. But Rogge will not be President forever. And among the candidates to succeed him are pole-vault legend Sergey Bubka, who is a chess lover, and Alexander Zhukov, head of the organizing committee of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics and active member of the Advisory Board of the Russian Chess Federation!

Beauty and Brain Games

And talking about chess and the London Olympics, here's more good news. As per tradition it will take some time to bring the Olympic torch to the English capital. In a 70-day relay, countless runners will carry the torch to the official opening ceremony on July 27th. One of the runners invited by the London organizing committee is 21-year-old Vietnamese grandmaster Le Quang Liem. He will carry the torch for a distance of 300

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Olympic torchbearers Le Quang Liem and Ngo Phuong Lan.

metres. Liem, the winner of the 2010 and 2011 Aeroflot Open, was the first Vietnamese athlete of one hundred to be nominated as a torchbearer for the planet's biggest sports event. The second invite from his country is Ngo Phuong Lan in her capacity of Miss World Vietnamese 2007.

Spicing up the Game

While the time that chess players will become like rock stars still has to come, Magnus Carlsen is not entirely unfamiliar with the world of glamour and glitter. The first ever grandmaster to be a fashion model, the Norwegian is moving in circles that most of his colleagues can only read about. Last September, as was widely publicized, Carlsen ran into his colleagues of the Red Hot Chili Peppers during a visit to Brazil. Carlsen was on a promotional trip for his sponsor Arctic Securities, the Chili Peppers were there for the Rock in Rio festival. Both bass guitarist Michael 'Flea' Balzary and guitarist Josh Klinghoffer are avid chess players and soon a mini-simul was arranged.

We're always pleased when celebrities embrace our game, but how do they look at us? Fortunately, the encounter in Rio was watched by another rock celeb, Snow Patrol drummer Jonny Quinn. The music-news website writes that Quinn 'witnessed a match between Flea and an unnamed master of the game' and quotes what he said in a recent interview with the English daily *The Sun*: 'We know the Chili Peppers well and when we were playing Rock In Rio with them in Brazil, we watched Flea take on the world chess champion. He did really well and the guy was playing two games of chess at once. He's a Norwegian fella. Flea did pretty good but this man was always gonna win. He held it back for a bit.'

Chili Peppers Josh Klinghoffer (l.) and Michael 'Flea' Balzary (r.) meet Norwegian fella.

Inspired Chess

Chess sets come in all sorts and sizes, and there is really nothing that can surprise us anymore. Yet, occasionally you come across a set that makes you pause for a moment. Such as the

set that was part of a charity auction organized by Bentley Motors Ltd. with the proceeds going to the Prince's Trust. All the items in the auction were Bentley inspired, such as the Bentley oil filler cap paperweight, and so was the chess set. For instance, the flying Bentley 'B' was the inspiration for the king and the elegant Bentley wings were the main influence for the queen. The design of the knight was based upon the wheel spokes which feature on the wheels of the Continental GT, and the bishop on the bonnet vents of the Supersports model.
Expensive? The set fetched 3,050 Pounds.■

'Quote, Unquote

'My goal in chess is to reach a rating of 2903. Because it's the first prime number after 2900.'
Magnus Carlsen in ***CHESS***

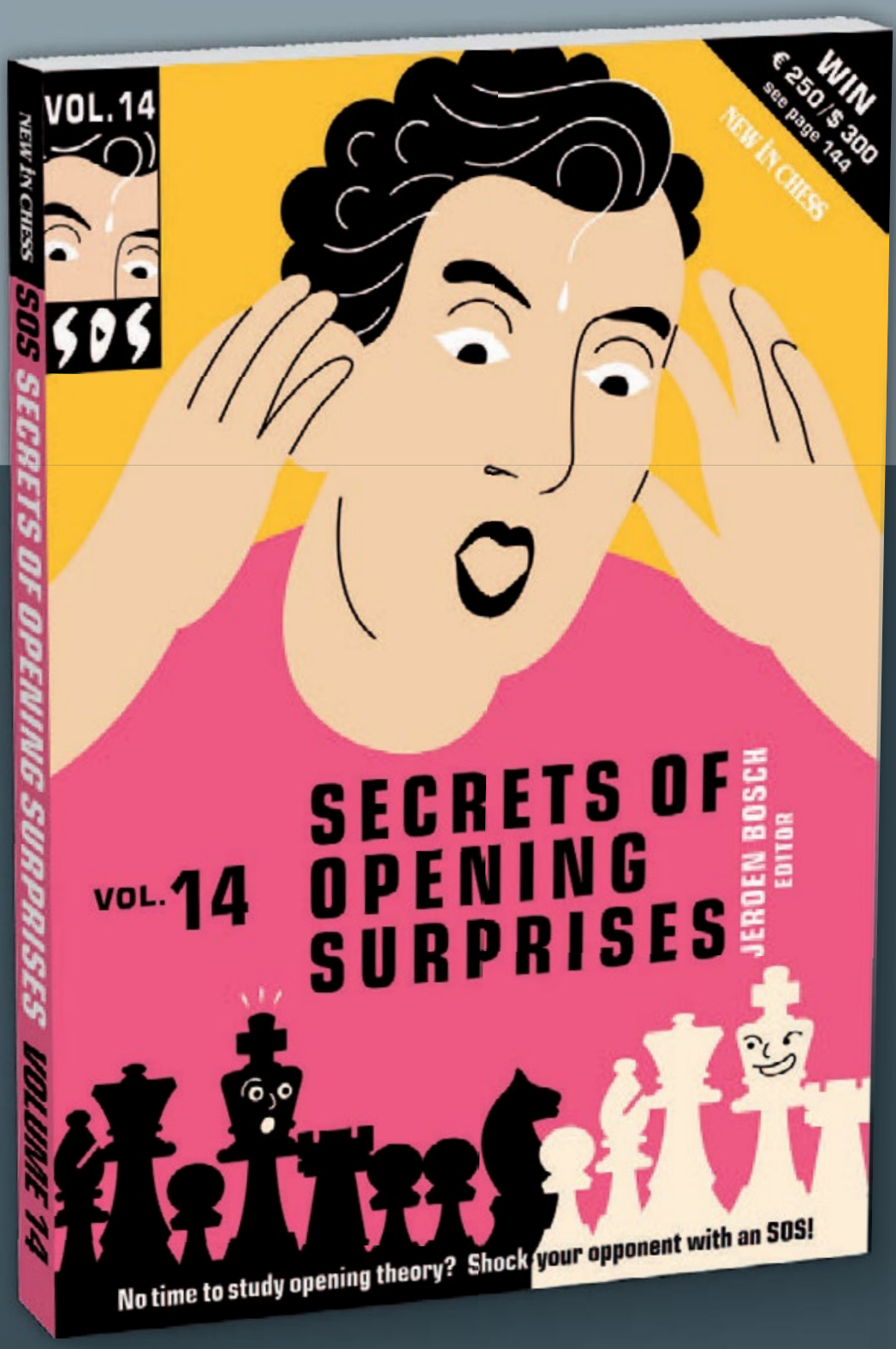
'I really did fall terribly in love during a game, and despite it being very hard to drag me into bed, almost impossible, I ended up there with that man within an hour. And that was my future husband.'
WGM Maria Manakova on ***WhyChess***

'In chess the rules are fixed and the outcome is unpredictable, whereas in politics in Putin's Russia the rules are unpredictable and the outcome is fixed.'
Garry Kasparov in ***The Financial Times***

'If we're talking about a seven-year-old child it's far better to play chess than to play video games. It does a lot of good things for a young person. I think it's a great thing.'
Ken Rogoff on ***Business Daily, BBC Radio***

'There are many different schools of martial arts, and they all have their own philosophy. In chess nobody had the courage to declare their position; most of the time chess politicians only repeat slogans without trying to put together some kind of system. This is an unfortunate situation and we need to change it. First we need to find the best place for chess in our world and show its future. Anybody is welcome to cooperate, because our slogan is: "victory is achieved by the mind." It does not mean that you win against somebody just with your mind, it means that everybody wins. We need to understand that a draw is the best outcome and the fairytale of the winning Maharaja is somehow today forgotten again.'
Jaan Ehlvest explaining his new teaching method for children, *Chess Gymnasium*, on *ChessBase*

It's wake-up time again!



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A NEW IN CHESS PUBLICATION

Sport and politics (2)

Aviv Friedman contends in New In Chess 2011/8 that FIDE should codify the abolition of any connection between politics and sports, backed up by expulsion and a disciplinary hearing.

I would suggest that you cannot separate politics and sports, and there is a strong case for suggesting you must not.

For example, a major factor over time, in the bringing down of Apartheid in South Africa (assuming we consider the practice of Apartheid to have been a bad thing) was the isolation of that country in the international sports arena. In fact, the head of the South African Cricketing body, Ali Bacher, has gone on record as saying that his country's isolation in Rugby and Cricket helped to undermine the self-belief in Apartheid which eventually contributed to its dismantling. For the sports-loving South African people and the regime, it mattered.

For whatever reason, justifiably or not (and there are many who argue it is not justified), the current governmental policy in Israel is viewed with great suspicion by many people in the civilised world and their governments (I am not talking here of preferences or biases of individuals, but the governmental legislative framework and public policy towards its minorities and neighbours. These discriminatory attitudes can be found everywhere, but the difference is they are not generally supported by public policy).

My argument is that you cannot stop chess players from exercising their right to stand by their principles. If a player chooses not to want to play someone from say, Syria, or Israel, because of what their governments are supporting, it is his or her right to concede the game (and the 'point' to be had by doing so).

Mr. Friedman makes a crass point about people refusing to play Caucasians, Blacks, or males. To equate a protest against an unpleasant regime with sexism or racism is, to put it mildly, nonsensical. He also suggests this may be used as a convenience 'to winning an event'. The last time I looked, defaulting games did not help in winning events.

Mr. Friedman is also wrong in stating Israel is at 'war status' with several countries. Again, I am not aware that this is the case, and perhaps he would be kind enough to tell us which 'several countries' he had in mind?

Srihari Iyengar
United Kingdom

Postscript Avid Friedman:

1. The distinguished gentleman's sad and inaccurate comparison between Israel and South Africa is his own opinion, to which he is of course entitled.
2. The policies of any government (and these do change, I believe in democracies such as Israel – the only one in the Middle East, I believe), and no single person can be held responsible for their policies (with which he may or may not agree). As such they are not representatives of any policy, but rather sportsmen.
3. To answer your question about war status (formal or informal), Israel has such status with Syria and Lebanon for example since the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

Lastly, the attempt to make it an individual heroic attempt at standing for principles is a flop. More than a few players came and privately apologized for having to refuse a pairings on orders from home. In my many capacities as coach of the U.S. team, I met with and spoke to plenty of players who would have to refuse to play me, but off the record got along with me fine. Chess like all sports should unite people, and has no room for boycotts.

Sport and politics (3)

We have a proverb in our Bulgarian folklore, of a pastor who says: 'Don't watch what I'm doing, listen to what I say!'

Three years ago in my report on the European Individual Championship in Plovdiv ('What's in a name?'– New In Chess 2008/4) I expressed the opinion (about short draws): 'To my mind, the chess players themselves are to be blamed for not being accepted in the big Olympic family and for lacking serious sponsorship. They have to rely predominantly on the sympathy of politicians.'

In the latest issue of your magazine (New In Chess 2011/8), Mr. Dvorkovich is trying to convince us that chess should not be mixed with politics in FIDE and in Russia. We will believe him, if we are inclined to forget the unexpected visit of Mr. Ilyumzhinov to Mr. Gaddafi and the presence of Mr. Gorbachev in Tirana (!?) at the Women's World Championship this year. But now there is news from Moscow! On December 27, 2011, former Minister of Finance Alexey Kudrin has sold his first (!) painting, named 'Chess'.

He sold the creation for €100,000. The buyer wished to remain anonymous. Which doesn't come as a surprise.

Simeon Stoichkov
Sofia, Bulgaria

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In sync with Kris

It took many months before the cooperation between Hikaru Nakamura and Garry Kasparov became public knowledge and we were happy to break the news and bring the full background story in our 2011/7 issue. The news of their breakup spread more quickly. The American stopped communicating with his illustrious trainer during the last rounds of the Tal Memorial and made no secret of the split during the London Chess Classic. Differences in their approach to the game inevitably caused friction. As Nakamura summed it up to us: 'It's just very difficult to perform when you have someone who is very demanding and really everything you do is never good enough. You don't get the pat on the back, instead you have that 800-pound gorilla, to use this American expression, who is just hanging on your back.' In London, where Nakamura recovered admirably from his last place in Moscow, he fully relied again on his friend Kris Littlejohn, a computer expert who has been remarkably successful providing him with opening advice. 'Kris and I communicate very well and are very much in sync, whereas with Garry I feel we were never really on the same page.'

London

Kramnik lets England Shake

In the third edition of the London Chess Classic, the English players had a hard time of it. At the end of the 10-day festival, the total score between ‘the World’ and ‘England’ was a telling 15-5. A prominent part in the massacre was played by overall winner Vladimir Kramnik, who notched up a clean 4-0 against the hosts to mark an inspired comeback after his poor result in the Tal Memorial. Second place was taken by another player who felt reborn in the British capital, Hikaru Nakamura. Although no longer coached by Garry Kasparov, the American scored four wins, one of them on his 24th birthday with black against the World Champion.

Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam

W

Within a short span of time the London Chess Classic has developed into the real-life social network that a chess tournament ideally is. While you're having a drink and a bite, maintaining friendships and forging new ones, you discuss the moves of the top-level games that are being played for your entertainment. Life could be much worse. Not surprisingly, many who attended the first two editions eagerly returned to the Olympia Conference Centre in Kensington, where they were happy to see that the character of the event had not changed. The only thing they had to get used to were a couple of improvements, such as the grandmasters joining the commentators during the rounds. Every day one of the participants was free and expected to share his views on the games in the commentary room. Round-robins with an odd number of players tend to be far from ideal, as you never know exactly what the standings are, but here this worked remarkably well. In order to maintain the tension till the very last day, the pairings had been slightly manipulated to make sure that bottom seed David Howell was the last person to get his free day. Had he played as confidently as in the first edition, where he finished third, this might have led to confusion in the standings, but sadly for him this was not the case.

For the rest everything was very much the same. At the start of each round, tournament director Malcolm Pein welcomed the audience and before introducing the players he spoke about the good work of the Chess in the Schools and Communities project. The ultimate ambition of the foundation is to introduce chess in one thousand schools. So far it is being taught in over 100 schools in England and Wales. Pein then asked a pupil of a visiting school to come to the stage to make the first move in one of the games.

Special guest on the first day was tennis star Boris Becker, who even played a game of chess against Nigel Short. Most other faces in the VIP-room were more familiar. Regulars were English GMs John Nunn, Jonathan Speelman, Michael Stean and Jonathan Mestel. In the final weekend, GM-turned-economic-guru Ken Rogoff dropped by, just like last year. Garry Kasparov did, too, signing large numbers of his latest book and delighting the guests by giving his spot-on assessments of the games in progress.

Special guest on the first day was tennis star Boris Becker, who even played a game of chess against Nigel Short.

Master of ceremonies in the VIP-room was former British champion Julian Hodgson, whose humour kept everyone in a good mood. But he wasn't the only funny guy. On seeing the opening of one of the games John Nunn commented that this reminded him of a game Nunn-Timman, and Hodgson cried out in disbelief (with his voice rising to a high pitch): 'Nunn-Timman? In which century was that, Doc?' To which the 'Doc' retorted instantly: 'Only one century ago!'

Hodgon's traditional sparring partner, guest-of-honour Viktor Kortchnoi, didn't participate in the discussions with the same enthusiasm as the previous years. He had health problems, which did not prevent him from giving two simuls, but made him more subdued. At times he was uncharacteristically silent, and you would know immediately when he started feeling better. After the start of one of the rounds Kortchnoi expressed his dismay about the openings by triumphantly predicting that all games would be drawn in 20 moves. Only one game came close to suffering that fate, but I was pleased by his belligerence. My mood improved even further when I praised one of the games of the previous round and Viktor Lvovich briefly chewed on his words before saying disapprovingly: 'That was one of the worst games I have seen in years!'

For the people at home it was a pity that the conversations in the VIP-room were not broadcast live, but they were magnanimously compensated for by the wonderful live coverage from the commentary room where Daniel King, Lawrence Trent, Stephen Gordon, Stuart Conquest and Chris Ward gave a further boost to British humour.

The third London Chess Classic was the strongest edition so far. England was represented by the same players as in 2009 and 2010, while 'the World's' strength was more impressive than ever with the first four players in the world rankings, Carlsen, Anand, Aronian and Kramnik, plus Nakamura. As the five foreign guests had had only one week to recover from the Tal Memorial, it was hard to make any predictions. Would the English players make up for the considerable rating difference with physical or mental fitness? That was a plausible thought to cherish, especially with the earlier star performances of some of them in mind. Still, those hopes were soon dashed. Three of the four Englishmen were in truly bad shape and their

lacklustre play had far-reaching consequences for the tournament. Only Luke McShane did well, very well actually, which perhaps confused the English fans even more. Recently their most successful players have been McShane and Matthew Sadler, both of whom have fulltime jobs!

After the Tal Memorial, Levon Aronian opined that the historical prestige of a tournament not only depended on the average ratings of the players, but also on the level of play they demonstrated. That was a valid point, which I was reminded of at the end of the London Classic, as besides the three Englishmen, Anand and Aronian also were a far cry from the players they usually are.

World Champion Vishy Anand failed to break free from the crisis that haunted his play in Bilbao and Moscow. He only managed to win one game, against Short. He lost to Nakamura and was on the ropes against Howell. Asked for a comment, Anand suggested to reprint his remarks after the Tal Memorial, before he formulated an answer anyway. 'I was very keen to make up for the last two tournaments, but it seems I am stuck in something and I can't get out of it. It often happens to me before a big match. It happened to me before Bonn, and before Sofia, when I had two wins and 11 draws in Wijk aan Zee. But this rut was three tournaments long. I've been suffering the last three months, let's put it that way.'

As a result his rating even dropped below 2800 (2799, but still), a painful detail on the eve of his world championship match against Gelfand, which he tried to be realistic about. 'I think it's deserved. Your rating will reflect your play. If I play well, it will recover. When you play like this you stop caring.' With only one week between Tal and London it was tempting to look for an excuse, but he would have nothing of that. 'Sometimes nothing really works. I am not going to blame all sorts of extraneous circumstances. It's clear that something is wrong and I have to try and fix it. The world championship is really a big event in front of me and I don't have the right to indulge myself in this thing. Now I really have to sit and work.'

NEW IN CHESS

Nigel Short and tournament director Malcolm Pein watch Hikaru Nakamura and Luke McShane analyse, as a cameraman of *60 Minutes* does his job.

NEW IN CHESS

Master of ceremonies Julian Hodgson and his sparring partner (and guest of honour) Viktor Kortchnoi entertained the guests in the VIP-room.

Levon Aronian, who scored exactly the same result as Anand (six draws, a win against Short and a loss against Nakamura), could have blamed his extremely busy schedule, but more than anything he regretted that he had not been able to show his best. 'It was the first time for me in London. I didn't really know how wonderful it is. The whole city, the crowd. I am disappointed that I couldn't play well, because I love to play well in front of this great audience. But your lack of freshness always shows. You can play well for a couple of hours, you can receive good positions, and then you don't have that fresh spirit to win games. I think that's what I was lacking.'

Still, their suffering was nothing compared to what the English trio at the bottom of the table had to endure. Nigel Short achieved his aim of not finishing last and at least winning one game, but that was where the good news ended. In his column in this issue he explains how rough the experience was. In London he gave one further example of what had gone wrong. Contrary to common sense he played the King's Gambit against Luke McShane. He knew he should not do this and was duly punished, but he couldn't fight an irresistible urge. This urge was not a sign of romanticism or a wish for adventure but plain 'lack of professionalism', as he called it.

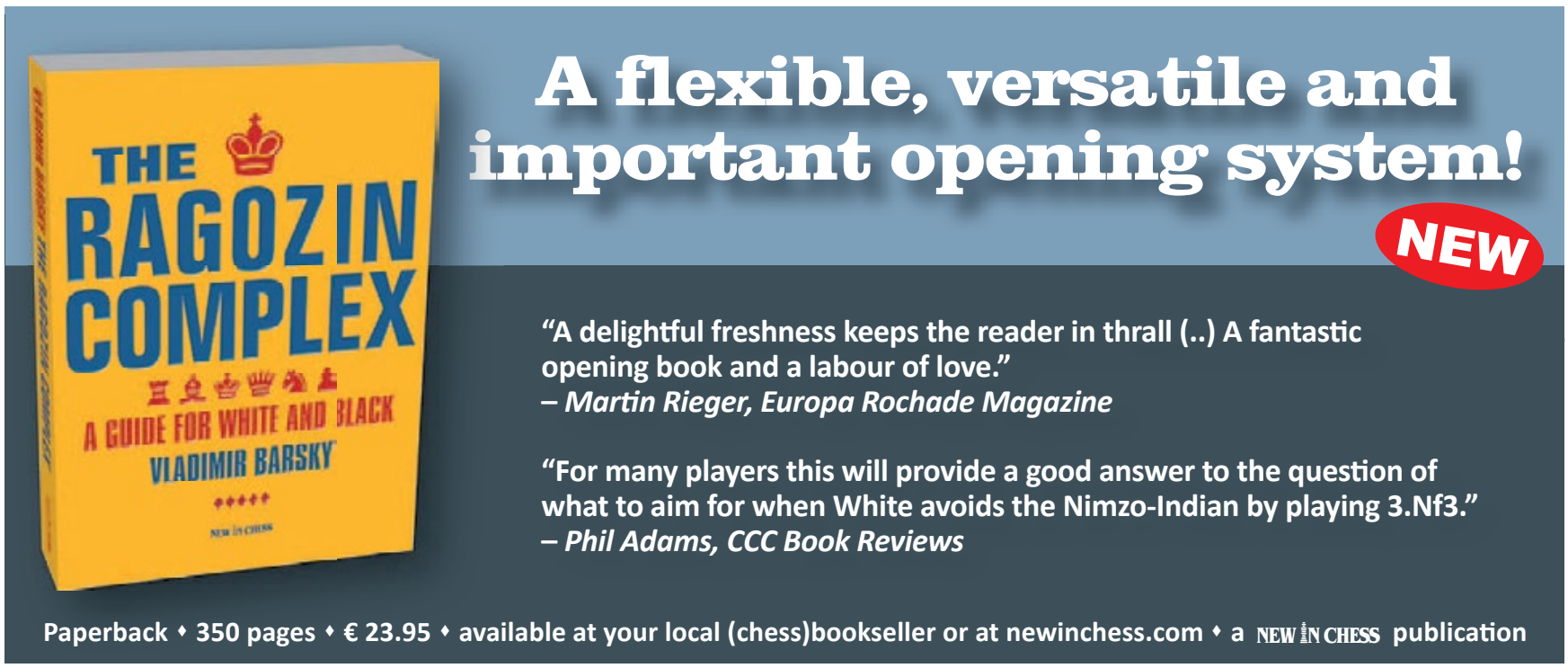
David Howell lacked confidence, lost four games and drew four. His best winning chance he got against the World Champion. Hesitating between a number of options he panicked, went for a safe continuation and had to settle for a draw. Howell felt that he had played too little recently. A student of French and Medieval Literature at Cardiff University, Howell seems to be in a privileged position. In a way he agrees, but he is also quick to point out that he is fully enjoying neither his studies nor his chess. At university he spends much of his time writing essays and the time left for chess is dedicated to studying openings. With hindsight he believes he should have played a tournament to avoid being rusty. So far, betting on two horses has been a frustrating experience. 'Especially when I am watching games online of tournaments, I wish I could be anywhere else playing or travelling. I get jealous of these guys playing every week. But when I am here, I don't feel as if am fully here. It feels as if I am getting the worst of both worlds.' Soon he hopes to make a choice and it wouldn't come as a surprise if, at least for the moment, chess will prevail. 'It's definitely what makes me happiest. It's the only thing I can imagine doing in the future. Something chess-related anyway. Playing, teaching, writing. I know I can be better. If a few things had been different in this tournament, my result could have been different. Maybe apart from the Carlsen and Kramnik games I feel I saw at least as much as my opponents, but it's just bad decision-making in the crucial moments. I often sit at the board for 20 minutes wondering why I played some moves. That's horrible.'

That last sentiment must have sounded very familiar to Michael Adams. The British Champion played what must have been the worst tournament in his rich career. Following his splendid score at the European Team Championships it seemed as if he could look forward to the London Classic with confidence. Sadly, almost everything that could go wrong went wrong. In all five games that he lost he had decent positions from the opening, and in some of them he was even better. 'It's pretty depressing. This was probably the tournament I was most keen to do well in, but even this is not an explanation for what I was doing. At some stage I just could not play at all. I don't remember anything similar.'

> 'He is better in tournaments where there are weak players that he can pounce on.'

The only Englishman who made the locals' hearts beat faster was the man who was introduced to the audience as 'the strongest amateur in the world'. Luke McShane has returned to work fulltime in the City and had to make a choice as to where he was going to spend his holidays, London or Wijk aan Zee, where he earned a spot in the 2012 A Group last year. In the end he let chauvinistic feelings prevail and opted for the city where he lives, a decision he didn't regret. Following a hard-fought draw against Aronian in the first round, he came close to an upset in Round 2, when he got a winning position against Carlsen. It was not to be. The winner of the first two London Classics defended tenaciously and saved the draw.

McShane was merciless against his compatriots, defeating them all, but didn't shun a fight against the elite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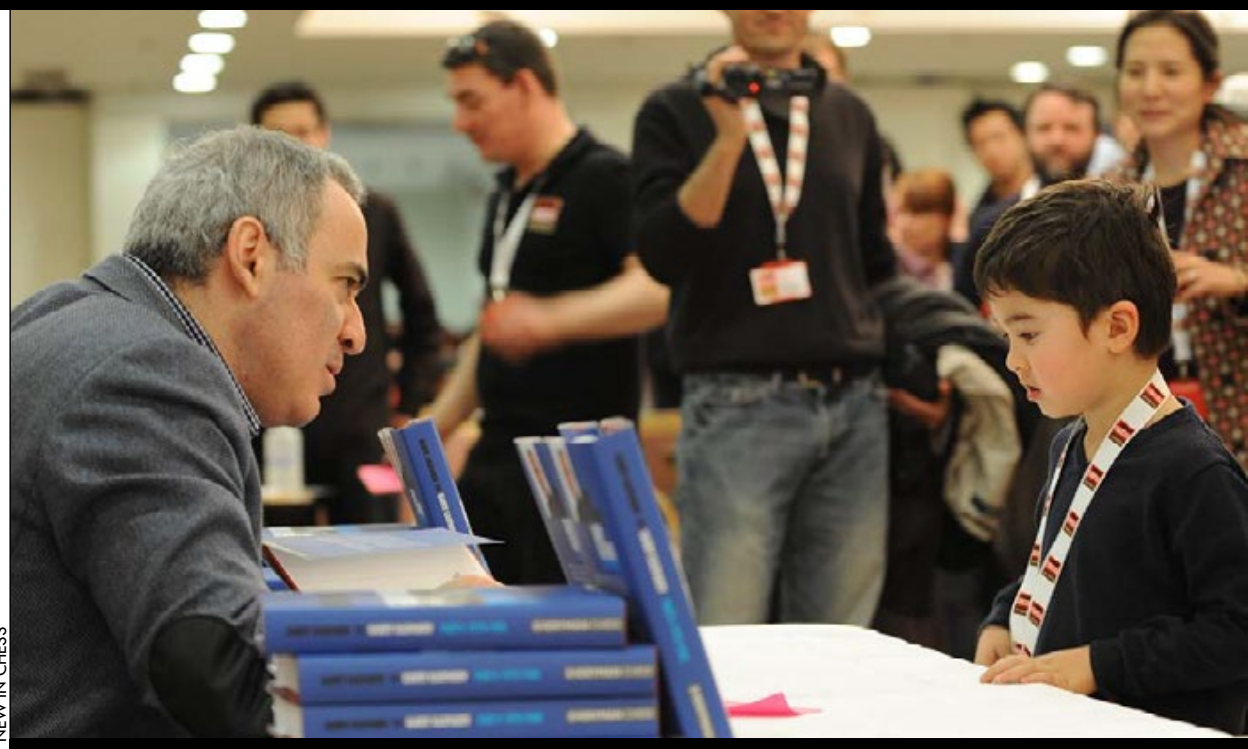


NEW IN CHESS

A long queue was waiting when Garry Kasparov sat down to sign his latest book. Apart from a signed copy this lucky visitor even got some personal words of advice.

either. Thanks to his wins against the English players he topped the table after seven rounds. A sensation hung in the air when in Round 8 he got a promising position against Kramnik. A win would bring him close to the greatest result in his career. What really happened kept him awake for many hours. For unclear reasons he declined to eliminate Black's passed f-pawn, an omission that cost him dearly. Instead of making headlines in the British press, he allowed Kramnik to score a point that would prove decisive for tournament victory. Looking back the next day, McShane admitted: 'I felt that I could not have given more to the game than I did. Unfortunately I lost my way at the most important moment, but I am not the first person to do that.'

A great result it was nevertheless. He had hoped to play more or less according to his 2671 rating. In the end his talent, will-power and tenacity resulted in a 2852 performance. Unavoidably, he was asked time and again whether he was considering returning to chess again. His face clearly showed that this is not his favourite subject. He took his decision last year when he accepted a regular job, and it obviously was a painful one. As he said when we briefly touched on the subject: 'It's easy to sacrifice someone else's pieces. It's easy to speculate on someone else's life.'

The win against McShane practically clinched tournament victory for Vladimir Kramnik. Only if he lost his last game with white against Aronian and Carlsen beat Short with the black pieces, would the Russian be overtaken by the Norwegian. That didn't happen. Both games were drawn and Carlsen had to work hard for that result.

For Kramnik's views after his impressive comeback in London we gladly refer to the interview further on. Magnus Carlsen took his 'defeat' in stride. 'It's a result I can live with. If someone scores plus-4... You cannot always do something like that. Of course it was annoying that Kramnik won yesterday. Or McShane lost, whatever way you look at it. But I cannot complain too much. This was all I had to give this tournament. The result was good, plus-3, but my play was not flowing at all. There was one game, against Nakamura, that was a good game. And Anand was a normal draw. But apart from that I made serious mistakes in every game. At one point against McShane I was totally lost, and then both against Aronian and against Short I was much much worse.'

Kramnik's return to good form had not really surprised Carlsen, as he noted with a grin: 'He is better in tournaments where there are weak players that he can pounce on.'

In fact, the only thing that really did bother him was the fact that Nakamura also finished ahead of him. In the final round the American faced Adams, who once again got a dream position and once again lost his way. When I asked if his annoyance about Nakamura's second place was caused by some sort of rivalry, Carlsen raised his eyebrows. 'What rivalry? He's a good player, but still my main rivals are Kramnik, Anand, Aronian. Not Nakamura.'

Hikaru Nakamura was delighted with his result in London after his last place in the Tal Memorial. Four wins, including a flashy black attack against the World Champion and another win against Aronian, had restored his self-confidence. 'The main thing for me was that after Moscow I wanted to prove that I can play against these top players. It's a good feeling to know that I can compete with the top players and sometimes even beat them. It turned out to be a great tournament for me, with the exception of two games. Obviously the game against Magnus, which I lost, was the low point of the tournament. Having said that I maybe should thank Magnus. By losing that game I got really motivated and decided to go for it against Vishy. The other game I was disappointed with is the one against Short. I released the tension and locked up the centre of the board unnecessarily instead of just trying to play the position and taking a chance. I was making it too easy for Nigel, especially considering he was having a bad tournament.'

In the last round he certainly did take chances and felt he had done the right thing. 'Today I felt like there was nothing to lose really. I wasn't going to win the tournament, but at the same time I wanted to play creatively and other than maybe losing some rating points, I felt that there was no reason not to take a chance. At the end of the day, obviously we all want to play good chess, but it's about the sponsors and spectators and giving them their money's worth. It's the last round, let the

fans enjoy it; I just put it all on the line. Objectively it shouldn't have worked out the way it did, but that's chess.'

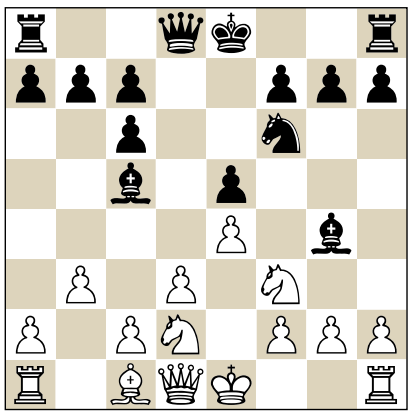
Another reason he wanted to do well, was his break-up with Kasparov. He wanted to show he can compete with the best, with or without his help. 'I feel that many of my decisions this year have been wrong. Not playing the US championship on his advice, not playing the FIDE World Cup, also a mistake. Playing Moscow, here and Reggio sounds like a lot, but I feel very good with my recent decisions and I feel very positive about the future. The thing is, Garry's database, his opening knowledge is very valuable, but you still have to play the game and be in a good mindset. One thing with Garry, and I think it is due in a large part to his Soviet training, he'll never quite understand that you have to be able to criticize constructively. When you have someone who is always on your case and it's never good enough no matter how you win a game, it just brings you down, you lose confidence. And as a chess player you have to be confident, you have to believe in yourself.'

And then we talked about his win against Anand, the high point of his tournament and one of the high points of his career so far. On his 23rd birthday last year, he defeated Kramnik in London, his biggest scalp till then. This year he again celebrated his birthday by winning his best game with the opening that seems closest to his own chess philosophy. 'When you play the Classical King's Indian, the game is never going to be perfect. You don't know if your moves are correct and the computer's moves aren't always correct either. That's one of the things I love in the King's Indian, that in many cases the computer gives evaluations and then when you run through lines it turns out that you're right and the computer is wrong. It's probably the only opening where the computer can be completely wrong and humans can be completely right. The player who comes up with the best plan wins.'

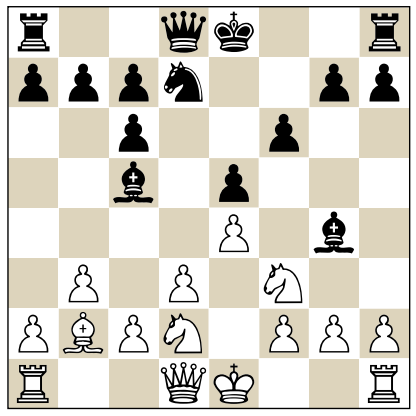
NOTES BY
Vladimir Kramnik

RL 7.1 – C65
Luke McShane
Vladimir Kramnik
London 2011 (8)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6
My usual opening against McShane. I should mention that Luke always aims for a fight. He himself plays and he allows his opponent to play.
4.d3 ♗c5 5.♗xc6
Quite a popular move; at any rate, it has been made by many strong players. Personally I could not bring myself to play this! Even after ...a7-a6 White does not normally exchange his bishop, and to give it up without it being attacked... The only plus point of this exchange is that after it White is assured of a tough and lengthy fight.
5...dxc6 6.b3
A very rare move. I did not know it. However, it does not change things much – the position was and remains equal.
6...♗g4 7.♘bd2
In my view, the immediate 7.♗b2 is more logical, after which in any event I was intending to play 7...♘d7 8.h3 ♗h5! 9.g4 ♗g6. The move in the game gives Black some interesting additional possibilities.

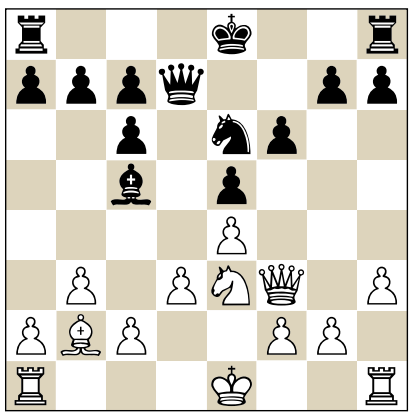


7...♘d7
Here I wasted ten minutes studying an interesting move – 7...♕d4. I very much wanted to play it, since it is indeed a rare and pretty move – without even capturing a pawn, the queen simply places itself *en prise*, and as early as the seventh move. This move was also strong, but, unfortunately, after 8.♘xd4 ♗xd1 White has 9.♘2f3!. This is effectively his only reply, since otherwise Black simply wins a pawn. Alas, after 9.♘2f3 ♘g4 10.♔xd1 ♘xf2+ 11.♔e2 ♘xh1 12.♘f5 Black is simply worse – White wins back the knight.
8.♗b2 f6



9.♘f1
Luke tries to play subtly, but I think that 9.h3 ♗h5 and only now 10.♘f1 was simpler and stronger. Possibly he was afraid of some tactic, but it does not work – if 10...♗b4+ 11.c3 ♘c5 at the least there is 12.d4. I was simply intending to play 10...♘f8, and then 11.♘g3 ♗xf3 12.♕xf3 ♘e6 leads to roughly the same position as in the game, but with an extra tempo for White. However, this tempo is not of great importance – the position remains equal, and Black cannot have any problems after this knight, as is supposed to happen in such structures, switches to e6.
9...♘f8 10.h3
If 10.♘e3 there would have followed 10...♗xe3 11.fxe3 ♘e6.
10...♗xf3 11.♕xf3 ♘e6 12.♘e3 ♕d7
During the game I thought that I was beginning to lay claim to an advantage. Possibly this was pure psychology – when it is so easy playing black, it seems to be time to hope for more. My opponent was sure that White had no problems.
Indeed, White's position is very solid, but a certain problem is provided by

the fact that he has to wait for Black to castle. For example, in reply to 13.0-0-0 there follows 13...a5 14.a4 b5, with a strong attack, while if White chooses 13.0-0, Black again castles on the opposite side: 13...0-0-0 14.♖ad1 h5. It was these considerations that provoked White's next move.



13.h4 a5

13...h5 was also possible, but this move fixes the pawn structure, whereas I was planning to play for a win, and I wanted to retain a certain degree of flexibility. After White's obviously forced reply

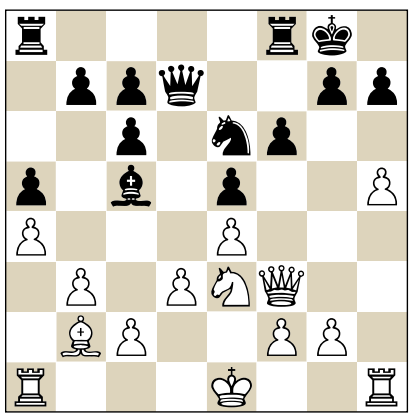
14.a4

I decided to castle on the kingside.

14...0-0

I realized that White would also castle on the kingside, and I was hoping that 13.h4, weakening the pawns in front of the white king, would tell.

15.h5



15...♗xe3

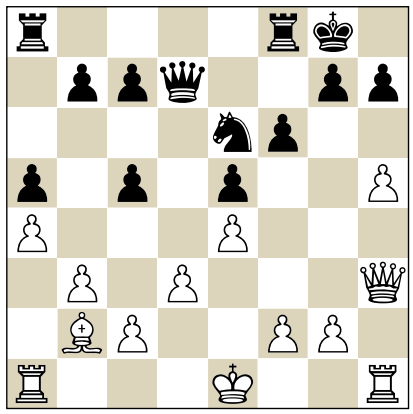
Quite a logical move, including from the standpoint of playing for a win. In such a situation it is always useful to leave dissimilar minor pieces on the board: bishop against knight or vice versa. In this specific position I was hoping to play 'à la Capablanca', for the restriction of the opponent's remaining bishop.

16.♕xe3

A logical decision – after 16.fxe3 c5 17.♕f5 ♖ad8 to the end of the game only Black will be playing, since White has no active plan.

16...c5 17.♕h3

The computer considers the position to be absolutely equal, but by human measures, in my view, it is more pleasant for Black. I spent quite a lot of time, but failed to find anything constructive, so I simply made a sensible move.

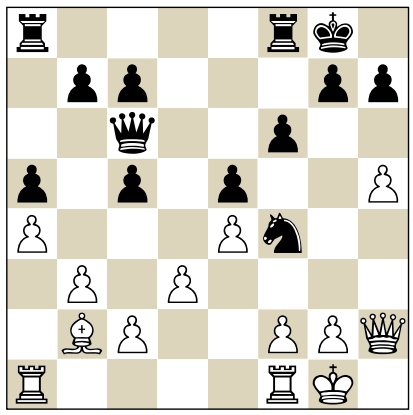


17...♕c6

This move releases the knight – after the approximate 17...♖ad8 18.♕f5 ♘d4 19.♕xd7 ♖xd7 20.♗xd4 ♖xd4 the position would be drawn. In addition, Black is planning play involving the advance of his f-pawn – for example, in the event of 18.g3. Therefore, to get out of harm's way, White castles.

18.0-0 ♘f4 19.♕h2

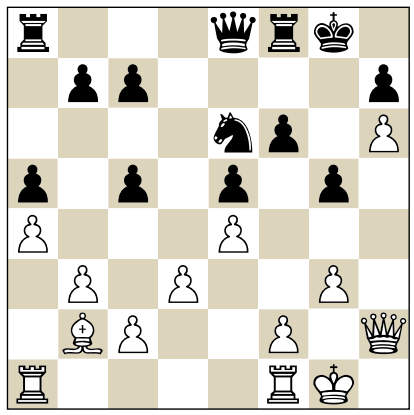
Black looks very nicely placed, but I was quite unable to find anything significant. Therefore I took a double-edged decision – after



19...♕e8 20.h6 (Forced) **20...g5**

the white h-pawn will become a good target for Black in the endgame. But now in the middlegame White acquires play – after all, Black has weakened his own king.

21.g3 ♘e6



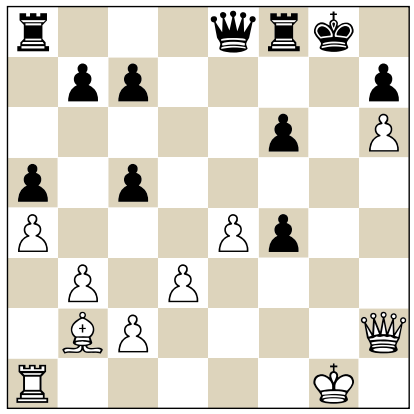
22.f4

An unexpected decision for me, which shows that Luke was also playing for a win. Perhaps he slightly over-rated his chances, or else he felt that, if he did not take a risk, he would no longer gain any chances of counterplay.

I was expecting something along the lines of 22.♕h3 ♖a6 23.♖ae1 ♕g6 24.f3 ♔f7 and I was intending to bring my king to the centre, and in the future to the queenside.

My opponent's decision (which, I have to admit, pleased me) sharply changes the character of the position. Instead of protracted, viscous play there begins an 'action movie', in which Black's chances are no worse.

22...gxf4 23.gxf4 ♘xf4 24.♖xf4 exf4



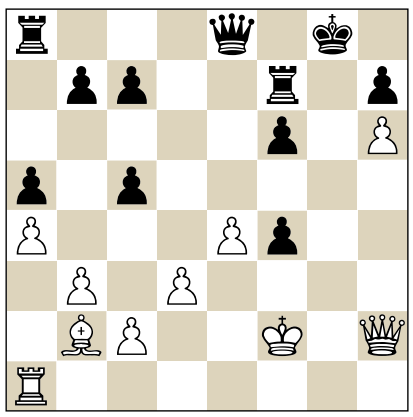
25.♔f2!

A very good move, which came as a surprise to me. In advance I had seen

that if 25.♕xf4 Black has time to play 25...f5 (25...♖a6 26.♔f2 f5 comes to the same thing) and after 26.♔f2! ♖a6 27.exf5 ♕f7 28.♖g1+ 28...♖g6 29.f6 ♖e8 Black is better, although the computer maintains that White can hold the position. Now, however, Black cannot play ...f5, but on the other hand he is able to make a very important move, which enables his king to move to the centre, rather than to h8.

25...♖f7!

25...♕e6 26.♖g1+ ♔h8 27.♕xf4 ♖f7 was worse. At this point my opponent again surprised me.



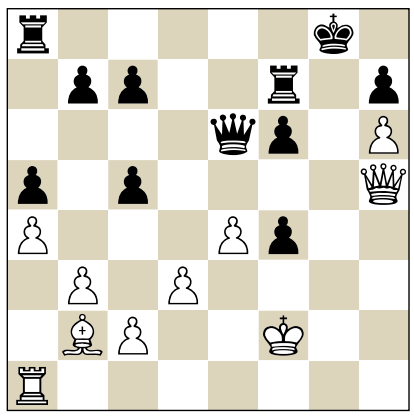
26.♕h5!?

I would not say that this move is the strongest, but it is quite cunning and, more importantly, it also came as a surprise to me.

I was expecting something like 26.♖g1+ ♔f8 27.♕xf4, when Black has time to make the important move 27...♕e6. Of course, it is not easy for Black to win such a position, but he is the only one playing for a win – it is hard for White to create any real threats.

26...♕e6

I cannot say what specifically concerned me, but I avoided the far stronger 26...♕c6!, when after 27.♖g1+ ♔f8 28.♕f5 White has no attack – neither after 28...♖e8, nor after 28...b6. All the same White would be forced to capture on f4, Black would place his queen on e6, and play would have transposed into a position from the previous note.



27.♕xc5

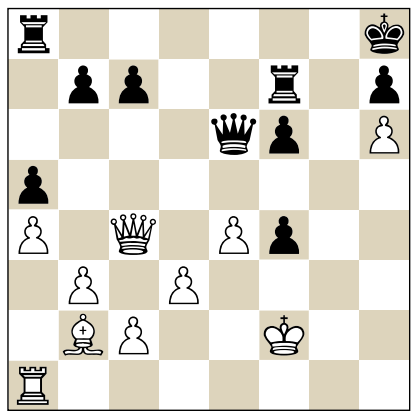
27.♖g1+ ♔h8 28.♕g5 looked strong, but in reply I had prepared 28...c4! – and now after 29.dxc4 I always have at least perpetual check after 29...♖d8 (true, in the computer's opinion, not more than that), while after 29.♖g4 there is the satisfactory reply 29...♕b6+ 30.♔f1 cxd3 31.cxd3 ♕d6. White avoids the trap, and now I have to play

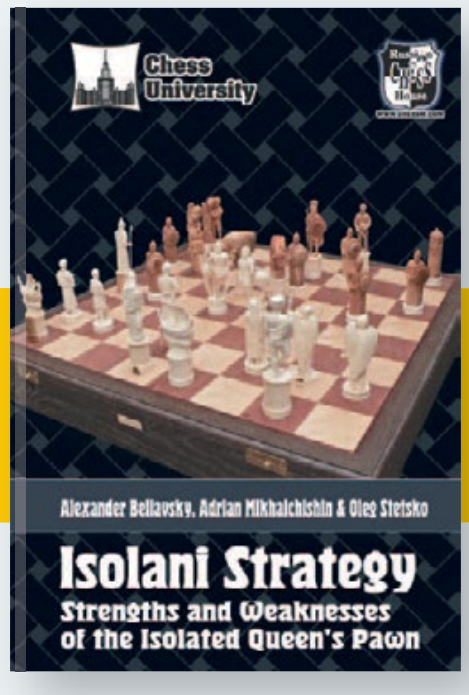
27...♔h8

because 27...♕h3 does not work – this move looks pretty, but after 28.♖g1+ ♔h8 29.♕g5 Black is forced to return, after losing a couple of tempi.

28.♕c4

Once again my opponent takes a rather cunning and unexpected decision. A very interesting move! I was expecting 28.♖g1, and after 28...♖g8 29.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 30.♕xa5 ♕h3 it appeared that I was not risking anything – there was a definite perpetual check, and a mate might be found. However, the computer holds White's position without any problems: 31.♕a8+ ♖f8 32.♕xb7 ♕g3+ 33.♔f1 f3 34.♕d5+ ♖f7 35.♕a8+ ♖f8 36.♕d5+ ♖f7 37.♕d8+ ♖f8.

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28...♖e8

I avoided the exchange of queens, as I didn't like the fact that after 28...♕xc4 29.bxc4 ♖g8 there was the strong move 30.♗c1. If White captures the pawn on f4 (for example, 30...♖g6 31.♗xf4 ♔g8 32.♖b1), he will simply obtain pressure for free. Later I discovered that Black has the strong move 30...f3, which, however, also leads only to a draw: 31.♔xf3 ♖g1 32.♗b2 ♖g6 33.♗c1 ♖g1 34.♗b2 ♖g6.

I realized that White was not worse, but I decided to play on – and therefore I chose the move in the game. It was stronger to defend the queen from another square: 28...♖a6 29.♕xe6 (29.♖g1 ♕e7) 29...♖xe6.

29.♖h1

And again my opponent manages to surprise me! It is clear that 29.♖g1 favours Black, since after 29...♕xc4 30.bxc4 ♖g8 he gains an important tempo. It is bad for White to exchange, and after 31.♖b1 c6 32.e5 ♖g6 33.exf6 ♔g8 Black has the right to play for a win.

Therefore I thought that White had to play 29.♕xe6 ♖xe6 30.♖g1 ♖c6 (this was my idea – to begin 'pestering' the white pawns from the sixth rank) 31.c4 ♖c5! (strangely enough, 31...♖b6 32.e5 ♖xb3 33.♗a1 ♖b6 34.♔f3 is bad for Black) and now White manages to make a draw by 32.e5 ♖xe5 33.♗xe5 fxe5 34.♖g5 ♖e7. However, Luke is also playing for a win, and he continues to maintain the tension.

29...♕d7

Neither of us wanted to force a draw. Instead of the move in the game I could have given perpetual check by 29...♕g4 30.♕xf7 ♕g3+ 31.♔f1 ♕f3+ 32.♔e1 ♕xh1+ 33.♔d2 ♕g2+ 34.♔c1 (34.♔c3 is bad because of 34...♕g6) 34...♕g1+ 35.♔d2 ♕g2+.

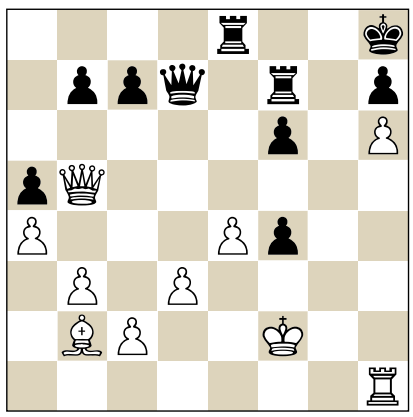
30.♕b5

Luke had roughly 5 minutes left, and I had 15. After rejecting a draw on the previous move, I took a bluffing, purely practical decision. In this decision there was a fair degree of emotion. The point was that over the previous five moves my opponent had all the time

NEW IN CHESS

> 'I was hoping to play "à la Capablanca", for the restriction of the opponent's remaining bishop.'

surprised me. I was rather tired of this, and I wanted to change the 'trend' – and to make, at last, a move which would be unexpected for my opponent.



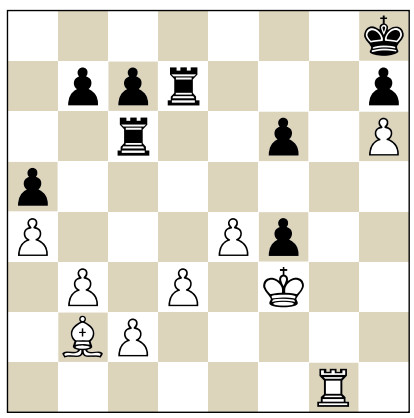
30...♖e6?!

From the psychological point of view this move justified itself, but objectively it is weak. I should have played 30...♕xb5 31.axb5 ♖g8, and although the resulting position did not greatly appeal to me, in fact it is equal. After the approximate 32.e5 ♖g6 33.exf6 ♔g8 34.♔f3 ♖d7 35.♖h2 ♔f7 36.♔xf4 it appears that White is better, but Black holds on without any problems: 36...♖g1 37.♖f2 ♖d8.

31.♕xd7

The natural 31.♕xb7 ♕c6 32.♕xc6 ♖xc6 33.♖c1 ♔g8 would have led to an unclear, double-edged position – this was the idea of the previous move. But if White had now found the strongest reply, 31.♔f3!, he would have gained an enduring advantage. For Black nothing more sensible is apparent, than in time to return with his rook to the 8th rank.

31...♖xd7 32.♖g1 ♖c6 33.♔f3



This position looks quite unpleasant for Black. During the game I would not have been greatly surprised if there had even been a forced win for White. This is probably what my opponent was thinking, since he spent almost all his remaining time, but did not find a win. Strangely enough, the computer reckons that not only does White not have a win, but he does not even have a way to gain an advantage.

33...♖d8 34.♖g5

34.♖g7 looked tempting for White, but I would have had time to play 34...♖g8 and after any move by the rook Black is alright – he succeeds in bringing out his king: 35.♖d7

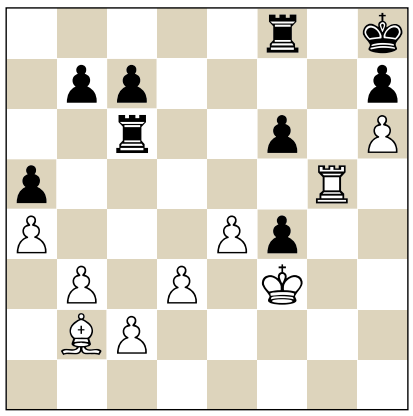
♖g3+ 36.♔xf4 ♖g6 or 35.♖f7 ♖g3+ 36.♔xf4 ♔g8 37.♖d7 ♖g1. This looks rather fearful, but Black holds on.

34.e5 also looked dangerous, but in this case too Black is not losing after 34...♖xc2 35.♗a1 ♖xd3+ 36.♔xf4 ♖f2+ 37.♔e4 ♖d7 38.exf6 ♖f7.

My opponent chose another continuation, also quite attractive. But after my reply

34...♖f8

Luke became rattled, spent nearly all his time and took a faulty decision.

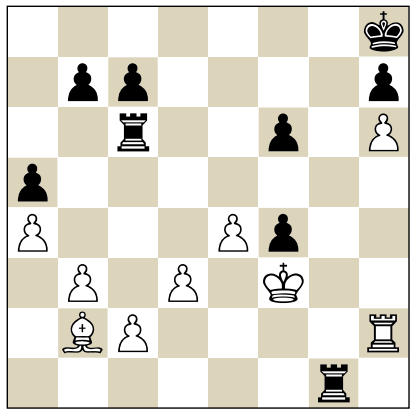


35.♖g2?

A mistake. White should have taken the pawn: 35.♖xa5. It is probable that my opponent did not want to release my king; indeed, 35...♔g8 would have led to a very sharp and unclear position, for example: 36.c3 (or 36.c4 ♖b6) 36...♖b6 37.b4 f5 38.exf5 ♖xh6. It is not easy to give a clear assessment of this position. At least my king has come out, Black will not be mated, so that during the game I assumed that the worst was over. Nevertheless, that is what White should have played. Now, however, after

35...♖g8 36.♖h2 ♖g1

Black succeeds in activating his pieces.

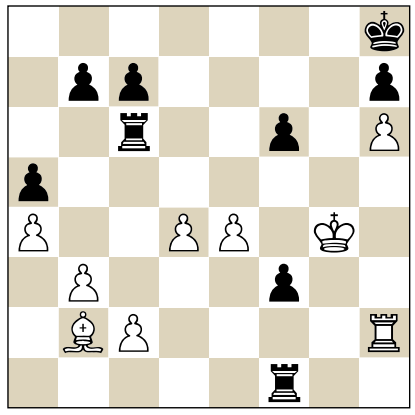


37.d4

I do not wish to judge White's actions too strictly, since he was in severe time-trouble. Of course, he should have captured the pawn – after the non-obligatory, but quite logical variation 37.♔xf4 ♔g8 38.d4 ♔f7 39.d5 ♖d6 40.♗d4 ♖g6 41.c4 ♖d8 it is clearly now Black who is playing for a win, thanks to the g-file. On the other hand, it would be difficult to win – White has a very powerful structure in the centre.

37...♖f1+ 38.♔g4 f3

Now, of course, I will not simply give up the pawn!



39.d5?

The decisive mistake! White should first have played 39.♔f5, and although after the strongest reply 39...♔g8 (after 39...f2 40.c4! Black can no longer win) 40.d5 ♖d6 41.♖h3 ♔f7 the position is still in Black's favour, White retains drawing chances.

39...♖d6?

An answering and highly vexing mistake. I saw a forced win and was ready to play 39...f2!, when it suddenly 'dawned' on me that after 40.♔f5 ♖xc2 41.♗xf6+ ♔g8 42.♖g2+ ♔f8 43.♔e6 White would give mate. I failed to see the simple reply 43...♖g1 and in my haste I made the move in the game.

40.c4 ♔g8 41.c5?

The time scramble was over. Luke thought for about 20 minutes and with his very first move he overlooked Black's reply. White should have

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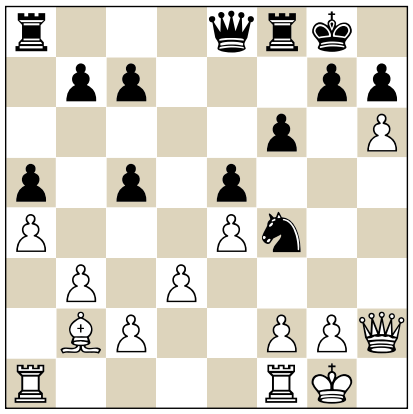
played 41.♔f5 and now after 41...♔f7 42.c5 ♖a6 he can more or less hold the position with the only move 43.♖d2. The position is very complicated and 'ragged', and so I will quote the evaluation of the computer, which gives '0.5' in Black's favour. The sharpness is retained, and White undoubtedly has drawing chances.



41...f5+!

A very important resource, which I had been planning back in the time scramble. At the cost of this pitiful pawn Black activates his rook, and after

42.♔xf5 ♖g6

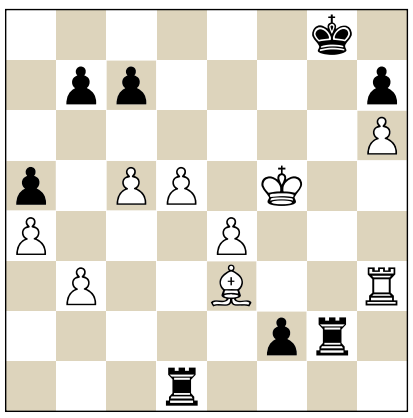
White's position has immediately become critical.

43.♗d4

Luke was visibly upset and he quickly made another mistake.

The only move which did not lose immediately was 43.♖d2. For example, in reply to 43...♖h1 the computer suggests 44.c6 – and White can still somehow resist.

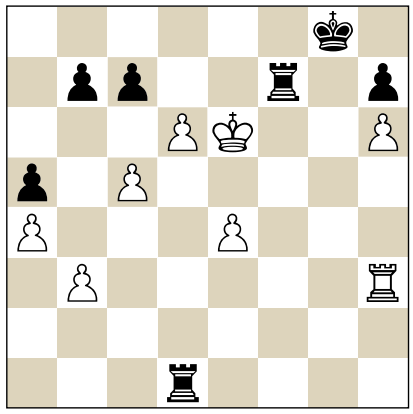
43...♖d1! 44.♗e3 ♖g2 45.♖h3 f2



46.♗xf2 ♖xf2+ 47.♔e6 ♖f7

The last precise move, cutting off the white king. Despite Black's extra rook, the game still retains some intrigue – thanks to White's central pawns. On the way to the win I had to avoid several rather cunning traps.

48.d6



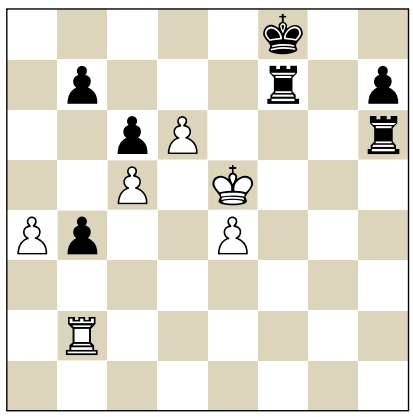
48...c6

The first subtlety – Black would like to play 48...♔f8, but after 49.♖f3!! White even wins. A very attractive and unexpected stroke, although I am not sure that I would have appreciated its beauty if it had occurred on the board. 48...c6 looks a rather strange move – it appears that Black himself is allowing the white pawns to advance. However, the white king may also get into danger, and this is illustrated by the variation 49.e5 ♖g1, with unavoidable mate. Therefore White cannot advance his central pawns any further.

49.♔e5 ♔f8 50.♖h2 ♖g1 51.b4

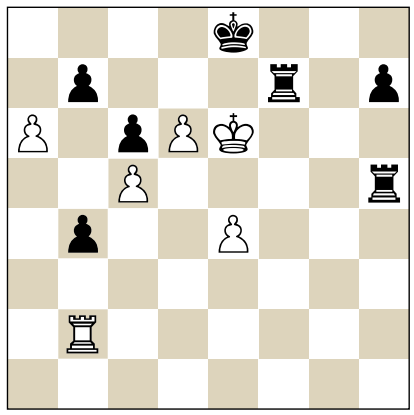
It appears that now all roads lead to Rome, but White persistently seeks practical chances.

51...axb4 52.♖b2 ♖g5+ 53.♔e6 ♖g6+ 54.♔e5 ♖xh6



55.a5 Again the best chance – after 55.♖xb4 Black would win quickly with 55...♖h5+ 56.♔e6 ♔e8 followed by ♖g7-g6.

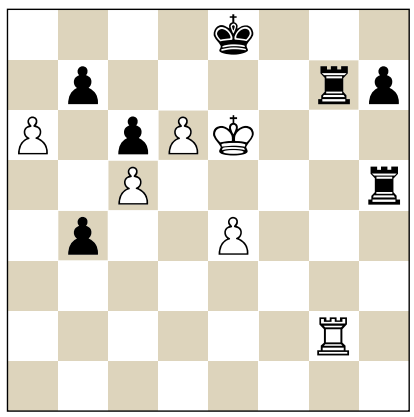
55...♖h5+ 56.♔e6 ♖h6+ 57.♔e5 ♖h5+ 58.♔e6 ♔e8 59.a6



59...♖h6+

Repeating the position just in case. I had already seen the line which was demonstrated in the game.

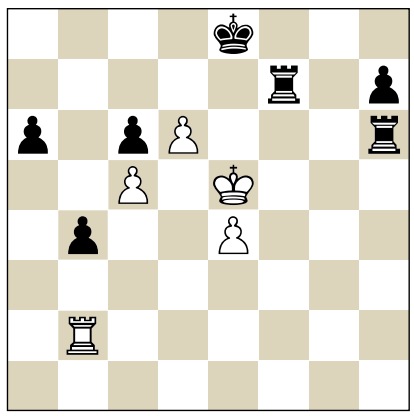
Strangely enough, not all Black's moves win. For example, after the apparently mating 59...♖g7 White has another pretty stroke – 60.♖g2!!,



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

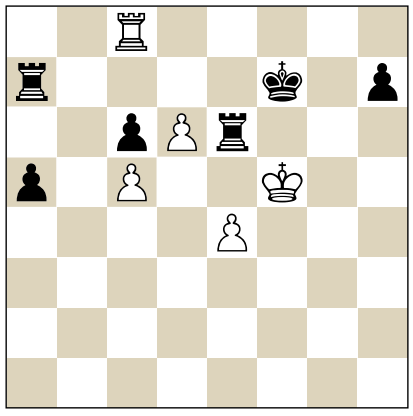
and Black can no longer win after 60...♖xg2 61.d7+ ♔d8 62.axb7 ♖g6+ 63.♔f7. I would have had to play 60...♖e7+ 61.dxe7 ♖h6+ 62.♔e5 bxa6 63.♖a2 ♔xe7 64.♖xa6, but this position is much closer to a draw.

60.♔e5 bxa6



It seemed to me that after reaching the next time control Luke cheered up somewhat. Visually it appears that White has achieved something, but in fact the win is trivial. The white pawns are not going very far, whereas the black a-pawn quickly advances towards the queening square.

61.♖xb4 ♖a7 62.♖b8+ ♔f7 63.♖c8 ♖e6+ 64.♔f5 a5



65.♖h8

In reply to 65.♖xc6 Black wins not only with the elegant 65...♖ae7, but also the simple 65...♖e8 66.♖b6 a4 67.c6 a3 68.d7 ♖f8, when 'nothing is going anywhere'. After all, a rook is a rook!

65...♖f6+ 66.♔e5 ♔g7 67.♖c8 a4 68.♖xc6 a3 69.d7 a2

White resigned.

The intensity of the battle was enormous, and I hope that this compensates for certain inaccuracies by both players. At any event, this was the most interesting game I played in London, one which, in addition, proved decisive in the competitive sense.

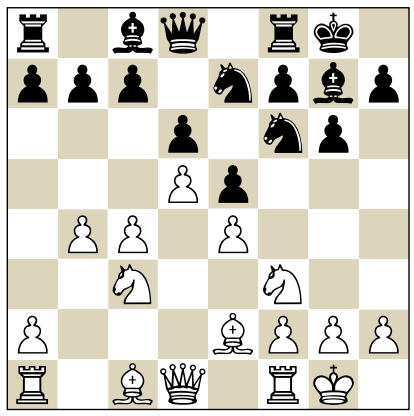
NOTES BY
Hikaru Nakamura

KI 5.5 – E97
Vishy Anand
Hikaru Nakamura
London 2011 (4)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6!

The spirited choice. Vishy is not a natural d4 player and has only picked it up since his World Championship match against Vladimir Kramnik in 2008. I have seen many descriptions of this game, and one stuck out in particular. GM Naiditsch reckoned that me playing the King's Indian against Anand was something akin to a samurai running at a machine gun with a sword. However, as in this game, if, like Neo, you can dodge the bullets, then you'll probably emerge victorious at the end of the day.

3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4

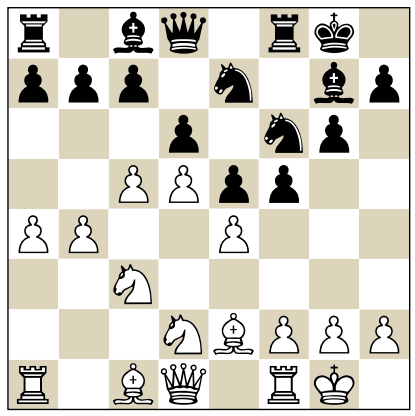


A very principled choice by Vishy. However, as I have had several brilliant wins against the Bayonet Attack over the past couple of years, it may have been the wrong choice in view of my massive experience against top-level players in this variation.

9...♘e8!?

The last time I faced the Bayonet, I did quite well with 9...♘h5 10.c5 ♘f4 11.a4 f5 12.♗c4 fxe4 13.♘xe4 h6 14.♖e1 ♗g4 15.♖a3 g5, and Black should be completely fine, as in Kramnik-Nakamura, Dortmund 2011.

10.c5 f5 11.♘d2 ♘f6 12.a4



12...g5!?

A relatively new try which I decided to go for over the board. I had briefly looked at this line while on vacation in Canada during my summer holidays. I could not remember what the correct order/idea was, so I simply played the moves that felt most natural. (Warning! Not a recommended method).

My previous try against Kramnik was 12...f4, and there certainly is room for improvement for both sides. I felt that this was OK, but I did not want to give Vishy a chance to surprise me. The game against Kramnik continued 13.♘c4 g5 14.♗a3 g4 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.b5 ♘e8 17.♗xg4 ♕c7 18.♗e2 f3 19.b6 axb6 20.♘b5 fxe2 21.♕xe2 ♕d8 22.♘bxd6 ♘xd6 23.♗xd6

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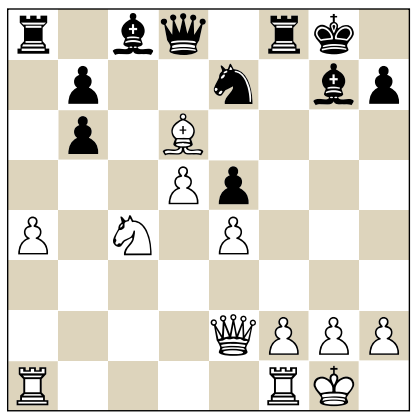


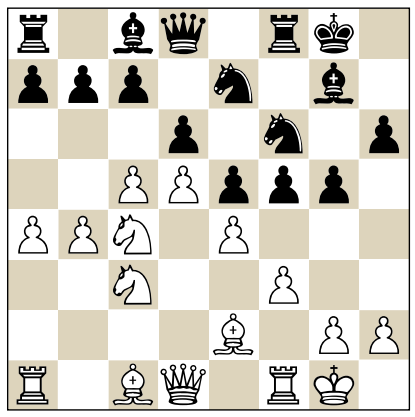
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

23...♖f7?! (the key improvement is 23...♖e8 24.♗xe5 ♗xe5 25.♘xe5 ♘g6 26.♘xg6 hxg6 – a complicated middlegame with chances for both sides; however, I prefer Black) 24.♗xe5 ♘g6 25.♗xg7 ♘f4 26.♕e3 ♕g5 27.g3 ♕xg7 28.♘xb6 ♗g4 29.♘xa8 ♘e2+ 30.♔g2 ♗f3+ 31.♕xf3 ♖xf3 32.♔xf3 ♘d4+ 33.♔g2 ♕f8 34.♖fe1 ♕xa8 35.♖ed1 ♘c2 36.♖ac1 ♕xa4 37.d6 ♕xe4+ 38.♔g1 ♘d4 39.d7 ♘f3+ 40.♔f1 ♘xh2+ 41.♔g1 ♘f3+ ½-½, Kramnik-Nakamura, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010.

13.♘c4

A new move. After 13.a5 f4 14.g4 h5 15.h3 ♖f7 16.f3 ♘g6 17.♗a3 ♗f8 18.♘c4 ♖h7 19.♔g2 ♗e7 20.b5 ♕f8 21.b6 hxg4 22.hxg4 ♘xg4 23.fxg4 f3+ 24.♗xf3 ♕f4 Black stands better and may be winning, as in Bunzmann-Nataf, France 2007.

13...h6 14.f3

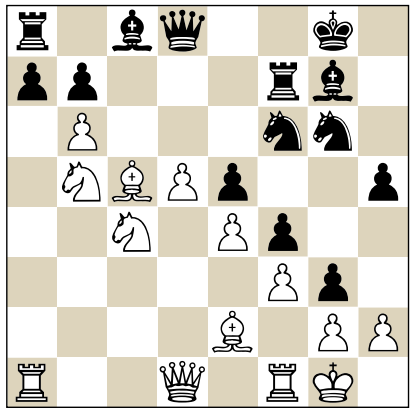


14...f4?

A very committal move. I play poker (not a pro, unlike what someone claimed in a New In Chess article two months ago ☺), and this is essentially the all-in move.

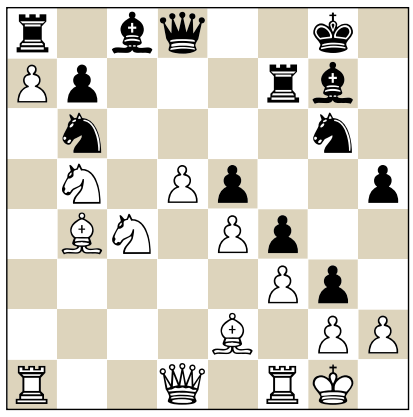
After 14...♘g6 15.♗e3 ♘f4 16.♕c2 fxe4 17.fxe4 a6 White definitely stands better, but it is certainly a better try than the game, where I am objectively lost.

15.♗a3 ♘g6 16.b5 dxc5 17.♗xc5 ♖f7 18.a5 h5 19.b6 g4 20.♘b5 cxb6 21.axb6 g3



22.♔h1? The first of many inaccuracies on both sides, but this is the King's Indian and no one can play perfectly unless your name is Houdini (not Harry) or Rybka.

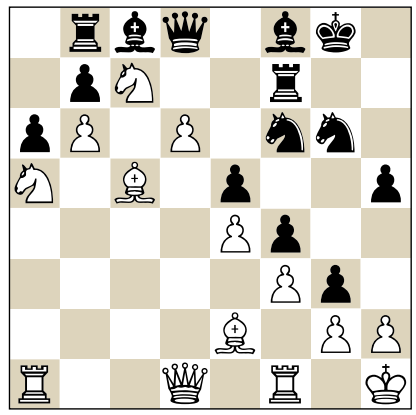
After 22.bxa7 ♘d7 23.♗b4 ♘b6



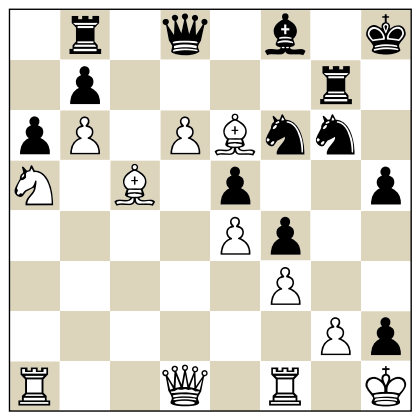
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

24.♖a2!! (a brilliant comp move which is the glue that holds it all together) 24...♕h4 25.h3 ♗xh3 26.gxh3 ♕xh3 27.♗d3 ♘h4 28.♘xb6 g2 29.♘xa8, and there is simply no mate and White is up more pieces than I'd ever like to count.

22...♗f8 23.d6 a6 24.♘c7 ♖b8 25.♘a5



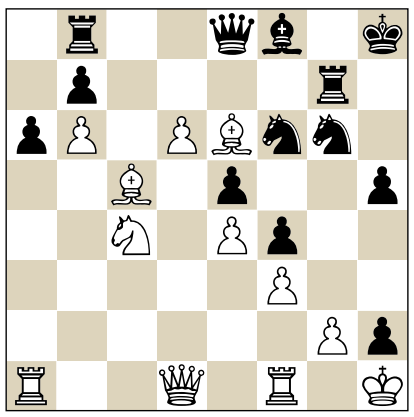
25...♔h8 After 25...♘d7 26.♗c4 ♘xc5 27.♕d5 ♘h8 28.♕xc5 ♗xd6 29.♕g1 ♕h4 30.♖fc1 ♔h7 31.♗xf7 ♘xf7 32.♘b3 White has a clear advantage. **26.♗c4 ♖g7 27.♘e6 ♗xe6 28.♗xe6 gxh2**



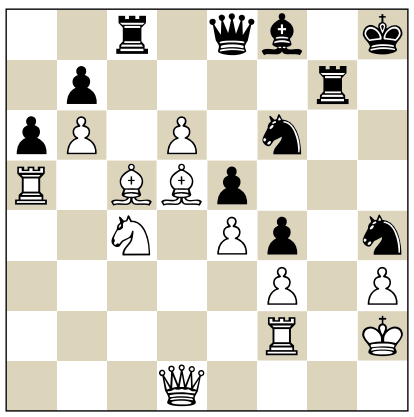
NEW IN CHESS

Hikaru Nakamura: 'However, as in this game, if, like Neo, you can dodge the bullets, then you'll probably emerge victorious at the end of the day.'

29.♘c4?
The very natural 29.♗h3 leaves White with a substantial advantage. However, the ideas involving ♗f5 and ♘c4 make a lot more sense during the heat of the battle.
29...♕e8!
An unexpected tactical motif.

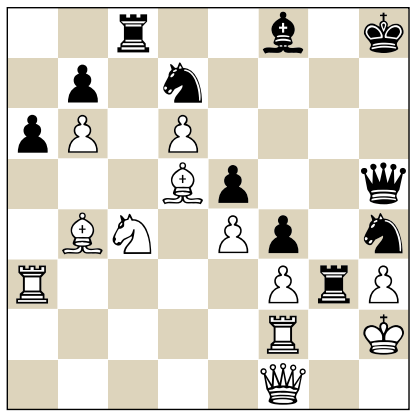


30.♗d5?
I was surprised at how quickly Vishy played this move. After this key mistake, it all goes horribly wrong very quickly.
After 30.♗h3 my idea was 30...♕b5!. However, White still has resources: 31.d7 ♘xd7 32.♗xf8 ♘gxf8 33.♕d5 ♖g6 34.♖ab1 ♕xd5 35.exd5, and even though White is down a pawn here, there should be enough compensation.
30...h4 31.♖f2 h3 32.gxh3 ♖c8! 33.♖a5 ♘h4 34.♔xh2

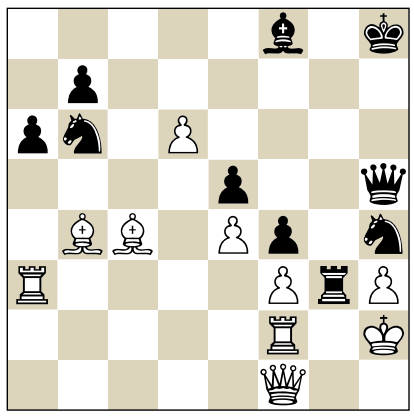


34...♘d7?!
Still good enough, but the computer finds an even quicker win: 34...♘xd5 35.exd5 ♖g3 36.♕e2 ♕g6 37.♕f1 ♗xd6! 38.♘xd6 ♖g8 39.♖a1 ♘g2!, and White cannot prevent mate without shedding a lot of material.

35.♗b4 ♖g3 36.♕f1 ♕h5 37.♖a3

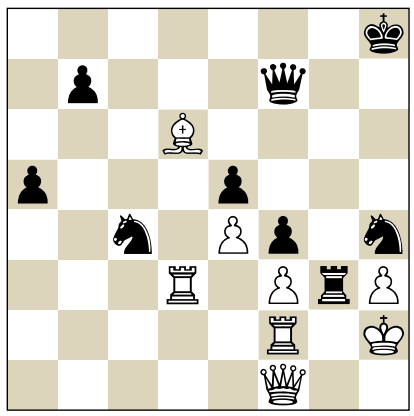


37...a5?!
The correct move was 37...♘xb6! (which was my original idea) 38.♗e6 ♖xc4! 39.♗xc4



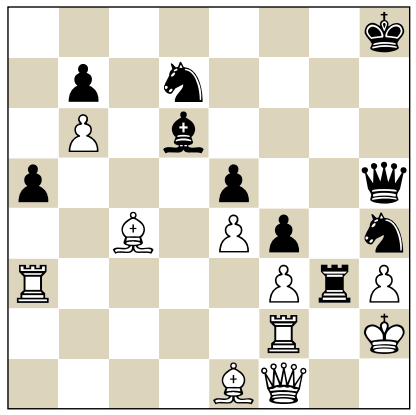
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

39...♗xd6! (this is the key move that I had missed in the whole sequence) 40.♗f7 (after 40.♗xd6 ♘xc4 41.♖d3 ♘e3 42.♖xe3 Black has 42...♘g2!! (a spectacular idea) 43.♕xg2 ♖xg2+ 44.♖xg2 fxe3, and Black wins) 40...♕xf7 41.♗xd6 ♘c4 42.♖d3 a5

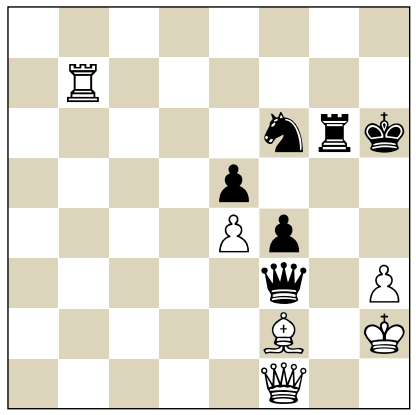


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A different sort of positional paralysis, with the two knights and the connected passers deciding the outcome.
38.♗e1 ♖xc4 39.♗xc4 ♗xd6



40.♖xa5?
Vishy's final blunder. It is incredibly hard to fault him, as the drawing variation requires several 'only moves', which a computer finds instantly but do not come intuitively to the human brain: 40.♖d3! ♗c5 41.♗e6! ♘f6 42.♖c2 ♖g1 43.♕e2 ♕g5 44.♗g4 ♘xg4+ 45.fxg4 ♖g2+ 46.♕xg2 ♘xg2 47.♔xg2 ♕g6 48.♖d8+ ♔g7 49.♖xc5 ♕xe4+ 50.♔f1 ♕h1+ 51.♔e2 ♕e4+ 52.♔d1 ♕f3+ 53.♔c2 ♕e4+ 54.♔d1 ♕f3+, with a draw by perpetual.
40...♗c5 41.♗e2 ♗xb6 42.♖b5 ♗d4 43.♗d1 After 43.♖xb7 ♘c5 44.♖b8+ ♔h7 45.♖b1 ♘d3! White is completely paralyzed, with no moves and mate to follow shortly.
43...♗xf2 44.♗xf2 ♘xf3+ 45.♗xf3 ♕xf3 46.♖b1 ♖g6 47.♖xb7 ♘f6 48.♖b8+ ♔h7 49.♖b7+ ♔h6



Here Vishy resigned. I had already known for a few moves that I would beat the World Champion, but once he resigned, I had to take several deep breaths to just enjoy the moment.
After 50.♖b6 ♘xe4 51.♖xg6+ ♔xg6 52.♕g1+ ♔h5 53.♗b6 ♘g5 54.♕g2 ♕d1 Black will win any ensuing endgame with the connected passed pawns.

NOTES BY
Luke McShane

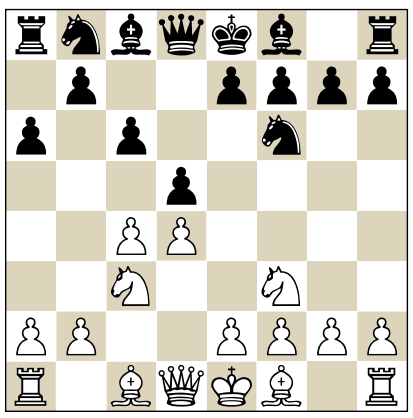
SL 3.1 – D15
Levon Aronian
Luke McShane
London 2011 (1)

The first round of a tournament is always a tense affair, and particularly so for me in this game. Apart from playing for Werder Bremen in the Bundesliga about a month before the tournament began, I hadn't played in more than six months, having returned to work in a full time job. I wasn't expecting much of myself, my main goal was to play at least a couple of decent games, and to avoid becoming the tournament punch-bag.
In that respect, I sensed this was a key game already, not losing would be a big psychological boost.

1.♘f3 d5

Leaving the King's Indian on the shelf, and perhaps a small surprise for Levon.

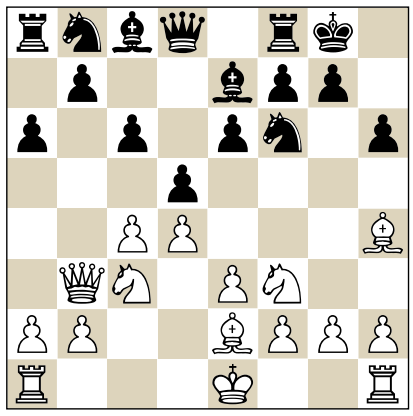
2.d4 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.♘c3 a6



5.♕b3

A move which gave me mixed feelings. Levon described this as a lousy move at our press-conference, but that was rather modest. As a sideline it had the desired effect. I forgot whatever it was I had looked at, and had to start thinking for myself, burning lots of time in the process.

5...e6 6.♗g5 ♗e7 7.e3 0-0 8.♗e2 h6 9.♗h4

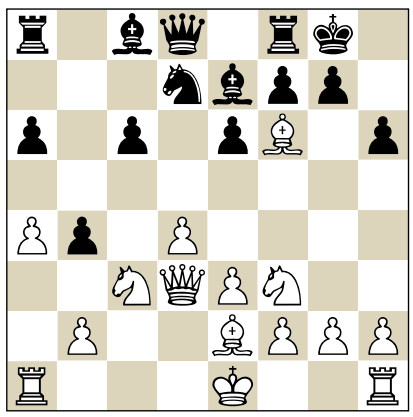


9...dxc4

Not the only way to approach the position, but a reasonable one.

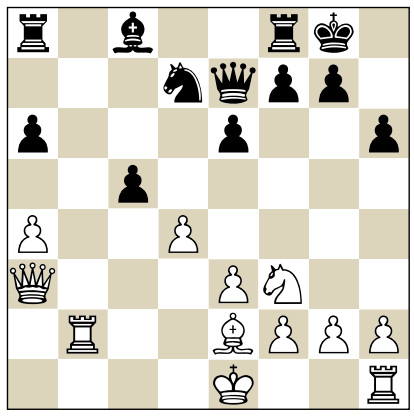
10.♕xc4 b5 11.♕d3 ♘bd7 12.a4 b4 12...♗b7!? was perhaps more flexible, as 13.axb5 cxb5 looks comfortable for Black even without any central pawn breaks.

13.♗xf6



13...♘xf6

After considerable thought, as all the captures are plausible here.
13...bxc3 is superficially tempting. But after 14.♗xe7 cxb2 15.♖b1 ♕xe7 16.♖xb2 c5 (16...e5 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♕c3 also puts Black under pressure) 17.♕a3 is unpleasant, as the bishop can't develop from c8.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

17...♖e8 18.0-0 doesn't help much, after exchanges on d4 White's knight will come to c6 quickly, combined with ♗e2-f3.
13...gxf6 is rather exotic, though I did take it seriously. Keeping the bishop and knight back ensures that ...c6-c5 will be achieved without much difficulty: 14.♘e4 f5 15.♘ed2 c5 16.d5 leaves Black a bit loose, but the bishops are strong.
13...♗xf6 14.♘e4 ♗b7 (14...c5 15.dxc5 ♗xb2 16.♖b1 ♗a3 is acceptable to my engine but looked rather contorted to me) 15.♖c1 ♗e7 16.0-0 and here perhaps I overestimated White's positional trumps. The bind on c5 is a little dangerous, but with calm moves Black should be alright.

14.♘e4 c5?!

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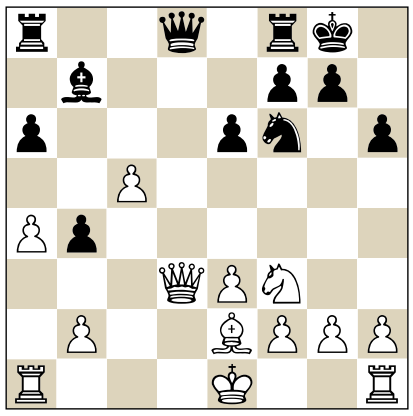
I used up a great deal of time convincing myself that this pawn break is playable here, but it is probably dubious. As with 13...♗xf6, it was probably safe to be a bit more patient.

15.♘xc5 ♗xc5 16.dxc5 ♗b7

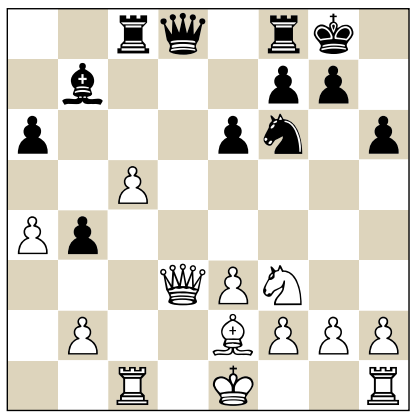
Now after normal moves like 17.0-0 Black will recover the pawn comfortably, so it's crucial for White to find something more incisive.



17.♖c1?!

17.♘e5 occupied me for a while before I sacrificed the pawn. After 17...♕c7 18.c6 (18.♕d6 ♖fc8 is fine) 18...♗xc6 19.♘xc6 ♕xc6 20.♗f3 ♘d5 21.0-0 I assumed Black was going to be saddled with an isolated pawn, until it finally dawned on me that 21...♖ac8! keeps control of the c-file, with enough counterplay for equality. When I finally realised that, it gave me the confidence to go for the sacrifice, but surprisingly it seems White does better to exchange queens as follows: 17.♕xd8! ♖fxd8 18.♘e5 would have been uncomfortable. For example, 18...♗xg2 19.♖g1 ♗d5 20.c6!? prevents ...♘f6-d7. With f3/e4 coming, White is doing well.

17...♖c8



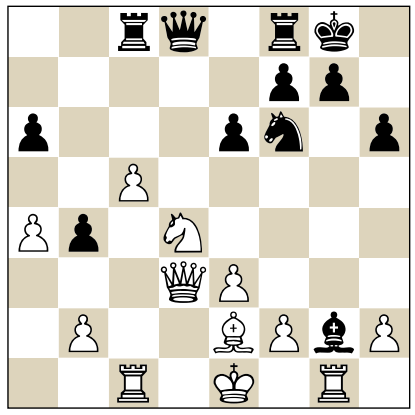
18.♘d4!?

A dangerous practical choice given my impending time trouble. Black has a full share of the chances, but this keeps a lot of spice in the game.

18.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 19.♘e5 is less effective here, because Black has 19...♘d7! (which would have been well met by c5-c6 without the rooks on the c-file). After the exchange of knights Black will recover the pawn easily.

18.♕xd8 ♖fxd8 19.♘d4 e5 20.♗f3 ♗xf3 21.♘xf3 ♘e4 also seems to promise Black enough play.

18...♗xg2 19.♖g1



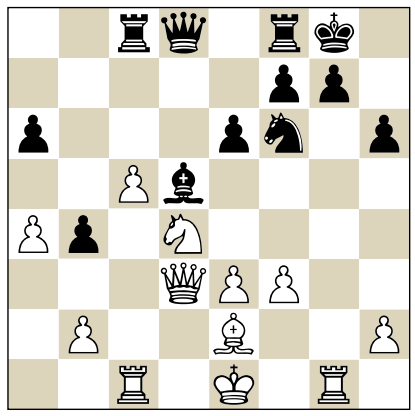
19...♗d5 Better than hitting the queen, as the knight will be happy on e4 after 20.♕xa6.

It's not easy to explain what is going on in this unusual position. The c5 pawn is not dropping easily any more, while I never felt that I had time to defend a6. White is normally happy to exchange queens, while Black's counterplay will be based on White's loose king. Nevertheless, for the time being my own king is staring down the barrel of the rook on g1.

20.f3

My machine tells me that it was better to take on a6 anyway, but it is natural to try to control the e4-square.

20.♕xa6 ♘e4 21.c6 ♕h4 22.♖f1 is just unclear from any practical point of view.



20...♕c7

I had to start taking decisions quickly at this stage, but as my hand released

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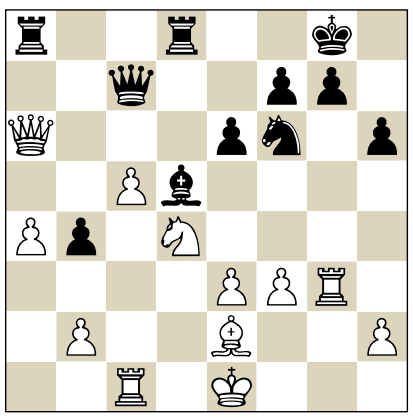
the queen, I kicked myself for not considering 20...♘d7!, when 21.♘f5 is a plausible counterblow (better than 21.c6 ♘b8!), but 21...exf5 22.♕xd5 ♕e7! leaves Black with the advantage.

21.♖g3 ♖fd8 22.♕xa6 ♖a8

My idea was to chase the queen back to d3, as I had assumed that leaving the queen cut off from the action on b6 was too risky.

However, 22...♕e5!? was probably better, as 23.♕d3 (23.♔f2 ♘h5 24.♖g2 ♘f4 25.♖g3 is a repetition of moves) is strongly met by 23...♕h5!, hitting h2 and preparing ...e6-e5.

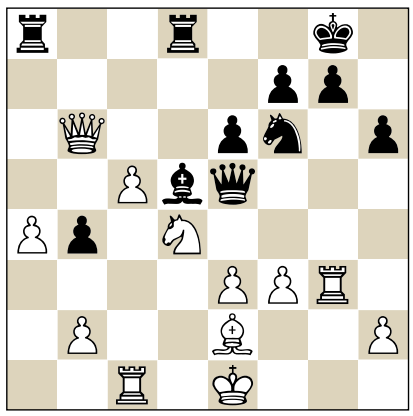


23.♕b6!?

Aronian surprised me at every turn. 23.♕d3 ♖xa4 24.c6 remains unclear.

Normally I would try to ignore the engine's ramblings, and discuss the ideas which were running through my head. The truth is, there weren't many, I think we were both trying to just play the moves which felt right.

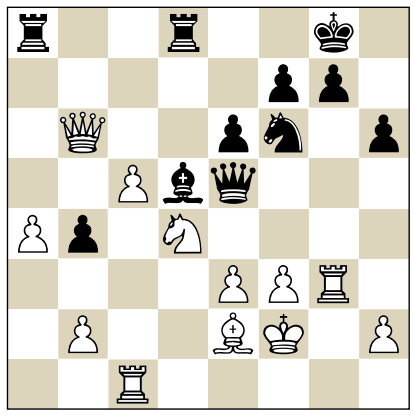
23...♕e5



24.♔f2

When I played 22...♖a8, I must admit I hadn't seen either of the other plausible ways to defend this pawn. When we got here, I was happy to note that 24.f4 ♕e4 25.♔f2 allows a dinky retreat: 25...♕h7!, when the threatened fork on e4 makes a draw rather likely, e.g. 26.♔g1 ♕e4 27.♔f2.

24.c6 is a stealthy way to defend the pawn, but Aronian had spotted that 24...♕xe3 25.♖xg7+ ♔h8! leaves too many of White's pieces hanging.



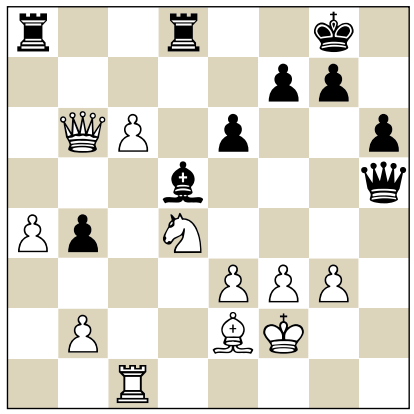
24...♘h5?!

24...♕h5!? was my first thought. I saw that 25.♖cg1 ♕xh2+ 26.♖1g2 ♕h4 was messy, and that 25.♔g1 ♕e5 might lead to a repetition. Then I noticed that the knight jump could easily end the same way after 25.♖g2 ♘f4 26.♖g3 ♘h5. Needless to say, neither line is forced, but there was no time to deliberate.

25.c6! This strong exchange sacrifice was yet another surprise, though it was naive to expect Aronian to cede the initiative here.

25...♘xg3 26.hxg3 ♕h5

Thankfully, the exchange sacrifice has not completely blunted the attack.



27.♔g2

27.c7 is the move I expected this time. After 27...♕h2+ 28.♔e1 ♕xg3+ 29.♔d2 ♖dc8 30.a5 White is rolling down the board menacingly, but the bishop and rooks make it hard to land immediately, so I thought I would have to try 30...h5 and hope for the best by racing my own pawn. I'm amused to note that my engine is just as confused as I am.

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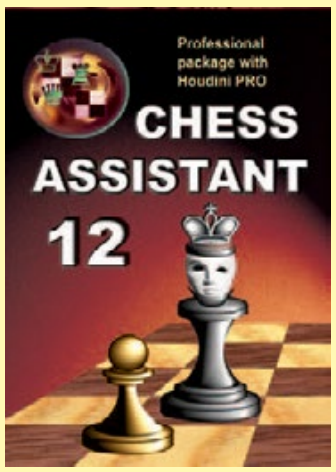

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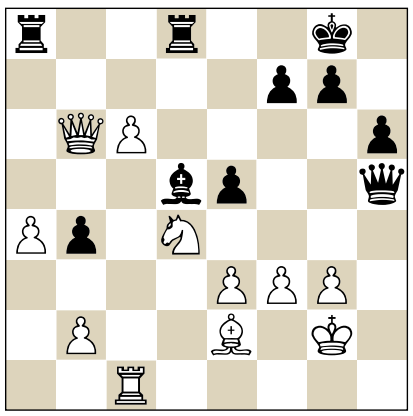
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		TPR
1	Vladimir Kramnik	IGM	RUS	2800	*	½	½	1	½	½	1	1	1	16	2934
2	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2758	½	*	0	½	1	1	½	1	1	15	2887
3	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2826	½	1	*	½	½	½	½	1	1	14	2879
4	Luke McShane	IGM	ENG	2671	0	½	½	*	½	½	1	1	1	13	2852
5	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2811	½	0	½	½	*	½	1	½	½	9	2740
6	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2802	½	0	½	½	½	*	1	½	½	9	2741
7	Nigel Short	IGM	ENG	2698	0	½	½	0	0	0	*	½	1	6	2613
8	David Howell	IGM	ENG	2633	0	0	0	0	½	½	½	*	½	4	2569
9	Michael Adams	IGM	ENG	2734	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	½	*	3	2498

3 points for a win, 1 for a draw, 0 for a loss

27...e5

Once again, the only way to continue creating counterplay.

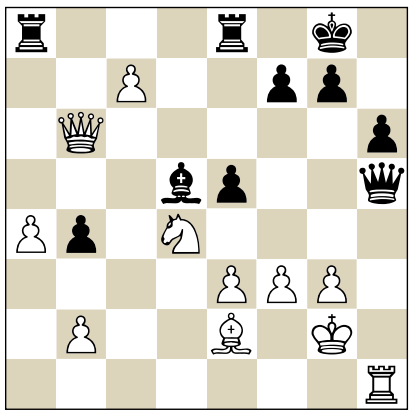


28.e4?!

Tempting, but apparently this misses a subtle opportunity.

28.♘b5?? ♗xf3+ is definitely best avoided.

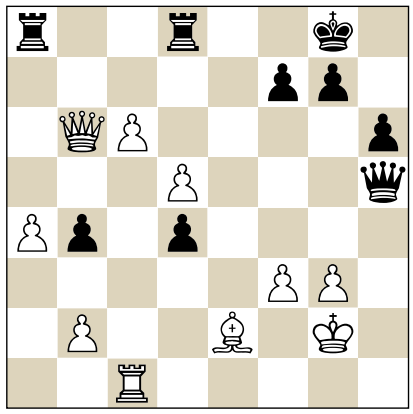
28.c7! ♖e8 looked good to me during the game, as 29.♘b5 is met by 29...e4!. The unusual crossfire on the diagonals is good for Black. However, during some light-hearted analysis in the pub, Jon Speelman suggested the superb move 29.♖h1!!



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I found it astonishing that shifting the rook from c1 could be so strong, but after 29...♕g5 (the exchange of queens on g6 is also miserable) 30.♘b5 there is no pin on the h5-e2 diagonal, so 30...e4 is just met by 31. f4. Without that, Black's counterplay is almost sunk, and the only option is 30...♖e6 31.♕c5 ♖g6 32.♕xd5! ♕xg3+ 33.♔f1 ♕g2+ 34.♔e1 ♕xh1+ 35.♔d2 ♖f8 36.♕d7, and White emerges with a big advantage.

28...exd4 29.exd5



29...♖e8!

I believe Levon counted on me recapturing on d5 with the queen, when c7/♗a6 is promising for White. But I felt the need to keep going for the king.

30.♕b5!

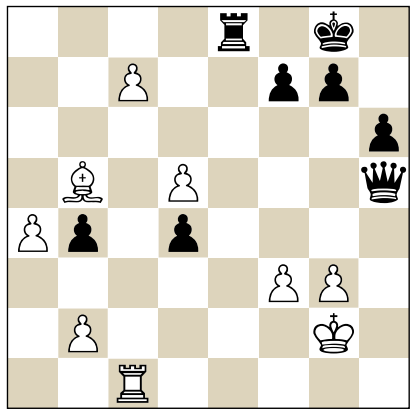
An excellent move, preparing a queen sacrifice where Black must still be accurate to navigate to a draw. Ironically, this was one of the few moves I had actually expected, so I replied pretty quickly.

30.♗c4 is the main alternative but then 30...d3! threatens ...♖e2+ and deflects the bishop. 31.♗xd3 (31.♖f1? ♖e2+ 32.♖f2 ♖e1 and the threat of mate on h1 turns the tables completely) 31...♕xd5 32.♕b5 ♕d4 remains messy, perhaps even balanced, but with the safer king I was happy with my chances here.

30...♖a5! 31.c7!

31.♕c4?? runs into 31...♖c5!.

31...♖xb5 32.♗xb5

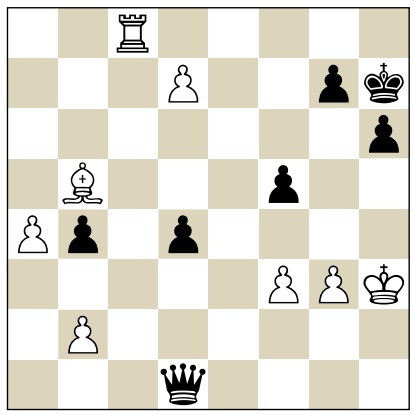


32...♕g5! This gains a vital tempo and secures the draw. 32...♖f8? 33. c8♕ ♖xc8 34.♖xc8+ ♔h7 35.d6 and the pawn sails into harbour.

33.c8♕

33.♖c2 d3! 34.♗xd3 ♖c8 and here the queen is nimble enough to cope with the pawns.

33...♖xc8 34.♖xc8+ ♔h7 35.d6 ♕d2+ 36.♔h3 ♕d1 37.d7 f5



The threat of mate forces White to acquiesce to a perpetual.

38.♔g2

38.♖c2 is no improvement: 38...d3 39. ♖d2!? ♕h1+ 40.♖h2 ♕xf3 41.d8♕ ♕g4+ also forces a draw.

38...♕d2+ 39.♔g1 ♕e1+

Blocking with the bishop doesn't change matters.

40.♔g2 ♕d2+ 41.♔g1 ♕e1+ 42.♔g2 Draw. ■

Vladimir Kramnik

‘I like playing chess now probably more than ever’

With an outstanding win at the London Chess Classic, Vladimir Kramnik ended a turbulent year on a high note. At 36, the Paris-based Russian remains confident that he can compete with the very best in the two to five years of top-level chess still left to him. Interviewed by **Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam**, the former World Champ speaks openly about his ambitions, the incredible stability of Magnus Carlsen, the upcoming Anand-Gelfand match, his attitude towards Garry Kasparov, the political situation in Russia and much more.

Vladimir Kramnik

With big strides Vladimir Kramnik went for the players' exit of the auditorium of the Pashkov House. With barely suppressed unease he had endured the prize-giving of the Tal Memorial. For the first time in a professional career spanning two decades he had finished a tournament without winning a single game. In the final round against Peter Svidler he had gone for bend or break in an attempt to claim at least one game, but again he had lost control in the fourth hour. Missing a tactical trick he had run into his second defeat. Kramnik wanted to leave – as quickly as possible. In the cloak room, as I watched him grabbing his coat and hastily putting it on, he emphatically dismissed the suggestion of a brief talk. He wanted to go. Nothing else. But before he ran for the door, he managed a brief smile and said: 'We'll talk after London.' And he gave me a look as if to reassure *me*: 'London will be different.'

Different indeed. Although there was only a one-week interval between the Tal Memorial and the London Classic, Kramnik seemed refreshed and determined. Gone were the wavering and the miscalculations. His play was energetic till the end, and with four wins against the home-bred grandmasters and a balanced result against the world-class foreign guests, he scored a tournament victory that no one could argue with. He also kept the second promise he had made in Moscow. After his win in London we had a long talk about a wide variety of subjects, starting with his emotions when he rushed out of the Pashkov House.

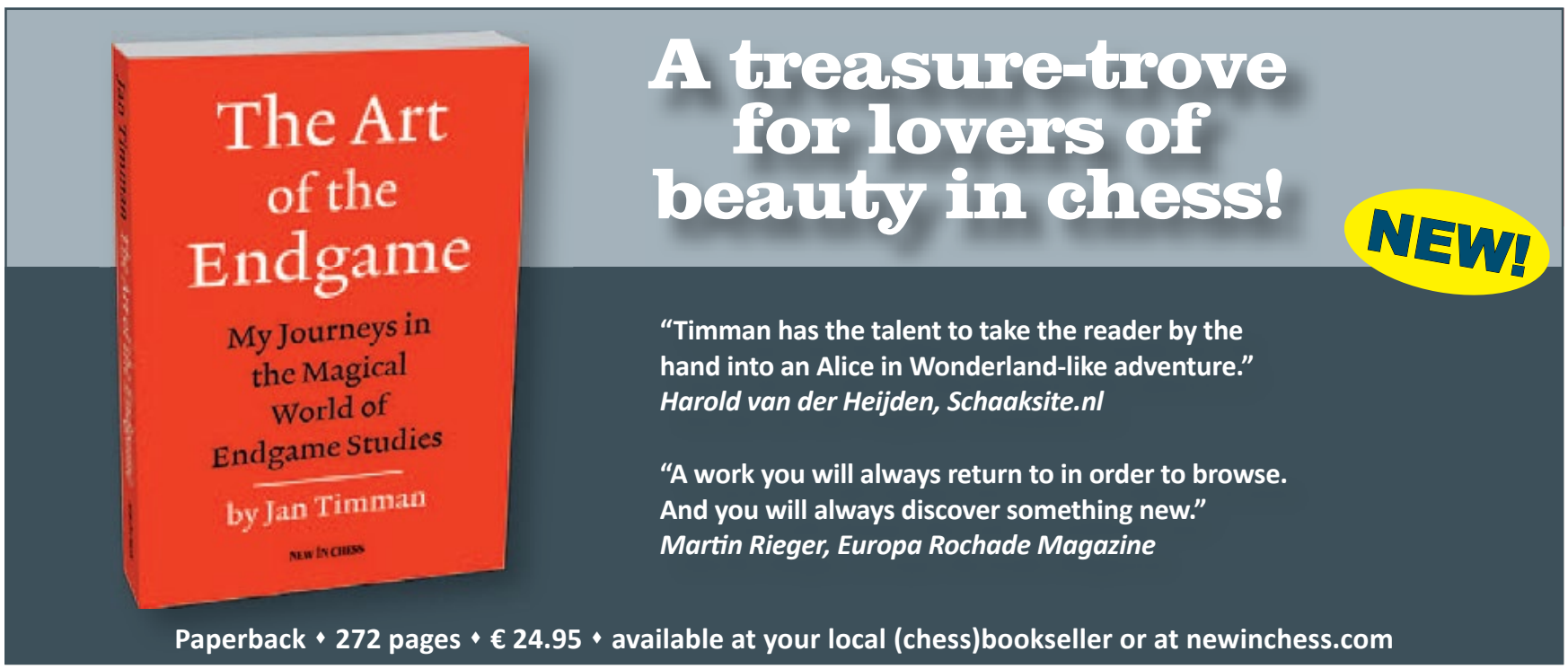
'It was a mixture of disgust and relief that this torture was over, because it was a nightmare from the very first round. I was not so dissatisfied with the quality of my play in the first three, three and a half hours. I was not playing badly at all for the first 30-35 moves, but then I would simply collapse. At least in every second game. Something simply was wrong with my energy. The last game was the apotheosis of all this. I told you that London was going to be better, because it was not about my chess. I needed to get some new energy and refresh my mind.'

How did you spend the evening?

'Just alone, I drank a bottle of wine alone in my room. I like company when I am in a good mood, but when I am in a bad mood I like to be alone. Alone or with a guy in the same mood. (Laughs) Maybe I should have had a bottle of wine with Hikaru (Nakamura, who fared even worse and finished last – DJtG). Being with a guy who is happy is somehow awkward. I don't want to be a burden, but there is a clash of moods. When you are happy you should be with someone who is happy; when you are sad you should be with someone who is sad. So since I couldn't find Hikaru in the hotel I decided to be alone. But it was not a tragedy. My main motivation always is to win tournaments, so at some point I relaxed a bit. It didn't matter so much if it's 50 per cent or minus two. First or second makes a difference, but fifth or eighth doesn't. It was not about the result, it was really torture for me to have to face the same story every day. You play decently and then, during the final hour, you feel totally disabled. Once I was back home, I started feeling better already. I just swiped this tournament from my mind, and as you can see I managed pretty well.'

External circumstances seem to play a role in whether you do well or have trouble showing your best. You almost always win in Dortmund, you tend to struggle in Wijk aan Zee and things often go wrong in Moscow.

'I think it's the same story for most players. There are some places where they do well and some where they do worse. For me it was getting a bit much. With my last three or four tournaments in Moscow I really went from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bad to worse. Maybe it's connected with the fact that when I am in Moscow I am asked to do more interviews and I meet more people than usual. This takes energy, but it would be too easy to explain it this way. I don't want to put the blame on the people I meet there (laughs), but it cannot be a coincidence. This year I lost 25 Elo points while playing in Russia, in Moscow and Kazan. Had I not played in Russia I would comfortably be number two, close to Magnus. Of course you cannot look at it this way and I am exaggerating, but in general it is clear that for some reason I have had big problems playing in Russia lately. The Tal Memorial is a great event – well organized, perfect conditions. It's something in my head that I need to work on. For some reason I feel that I am losing energy very quickly when I am in Russia. I must agree with what Magnus said in New In Chess, that Moscow is an energy-sapping city. This is really true. I have always felt that, too; Moscow is a very tense city. But you have to manage. It's unpleasant that people in my own country who come to see me, who do not follow chess that closely, may get the impression that I am already a complete veteran who can no longer play, even though I am still number three or four in the world. When I play in Moscow, it seems as if any other Russian player is better than me. That's an uncomfortable feeling.'

NEW IN CHESS

Vladimir Kramnik talks to Yuri Dokhoian, Russia's new trainer ('the best we can have at the moment') and Ilya Levitov, managing director of the Russian chess federation.

> 'If at the next Olympiad we meet the English team, they can be sure that I am going to play'

The brief time between the Tal Memorial and the London Chess Classic was mainly spent travelling to Paris and then on to London. What else did you do?

'Nothing special. Being with your family and a small daughter is always a good way to forget about chess. Of course I couldn't forget completely; your confidence has been shaken a bit. You cannot be sure that the story won't continue in London. I think I took a very good decision to bring my wife and child for the first half of the tournament. They gave me a lot of positive emotions and everything was completely different. The organizers in London created a very friendly atmosphere. My daughter is always very cheerful and lively, and it was good to have my wife around. Somehow, thanks to all this, I started feeling much better emotionally. Which also showed that it was nothing to do with my form, as you cannot change your form in such a short time. I stopped making mistakes in the fourth hour and things went completely differently. I am not only totally satisfied with my result but also with my level of chess. I may not have had the level to score plus-4, as I did. I was a bit lucky. Some players just collapsed, but I performed still clearly above 2800, the level I would like to have in general.'

The change was certainly impressive. You drew with the World and routed the English team 4-0. Which almost looked like a plan.

'I joked that if at the next Olympiad we meet the English team, they can be sure that I am going to play. I am not going to rest on that day (laughs). It was not a plan, but pure coincidence. Three of their four players were not in the best of forms. My game against Nigel in the second round gave a very positive buzz. I have to admit that winning with black against a player like Nigel without too much effort is a little lucky. I finally started feeling that I got some wind in my back and not in my face. I was not yet sure about my form, since I got the point almost for free. It was Nigel's first game of the tournament, and I could feel he was very nervous. It was obviously a very bad day for him. I didn't do anything special to win the game, which is strange.'

Does this 4-0 show that you're incredibly good at exploiting the small but essential differences between supergrandmasters and strong grandmasters outside that elite league?

'It seems so. In fact, I was never really good at this. This was always my problem; that I failed to score more points against the lower part of the table. But

in the past year I showed an amazing result against under-2750 players, particularly in Dortmund and Hoogeveen, where I really killed them. Maybe I've changed my style a bit. I felt the decisive moment was against Mickey (Adams), which got me to plus-2. Here I have to add an important detail. I still had to qualify for the Candidates' tournament. Before Moscow the gap between me and Karjakin, who was the only one who could overtake me by his average rating, was pretty serious, but after Tal, according to my calculation I had to make 50 per cent or more in London. If I scored less, let's say minus-one, I would already not qualify. Of course, normally speaking I should never make less than 50 per cent in London, but then, normally speaking I shouldn't make minus-2 in Moscow either. I was not seriously worried, but you become careful. After my win against Adams I could relax and forget about all this and start thinking about first place. It was not an easy game. Up to a certain point he played quite well, and the position was very double-edged. He even had chances of an advantage, and I was lower on time too. But then he started to go wrong, as unfortunately happened to him in most of his games in this tournament.'

I just mentioned the super-grandmasters. Do you agree that there is some sort of super-league at the moment, consisting of Carlsen, Anand, Aronian and you?

'According to the ratings this is pretty obvious, but I would say that there are a few players who are very close. Right now nothing is clear about Topalov. I think he could belong to this super-league, but lately he seems to have pensioned himself off a bit. Now he is finally going to play in Wijk aan Zee, so let's see what he is going to do. There are other players. Karjakin has the potential to be part of this group. Chess-wise he is already very close, but there are other aspects that he should still work on. So it will not be forever, but for the moment it is like this, yes.'

> 'Magnus is now the best player, but I don't think the margin is as big as the rating shows'

Maybe we can look at them individually, as I'm curious what you think about them. According to Kasparov, Carlsen is now clearly the best player in the world.

'Not clearly. Magnus is now the best player, but I don't think the margin is as big as the rating shows. But the rating says it very clearly, he is now number one. If there was a tournament between the top four players, playing each other four times, I am not sure he would manage to keep his rating. It's not because he is not the best. He is. But his chess is a little bit better than that of the others – not a lot. His main strength, to begin with, is his excellent physical shape. Levon, for instance, had clearly totally run out of energy in London. It had nothing to do with his chess. He had no energy at all, as this was his fifth tournament in a row. With Magnus this never happens, I have never seen him really tired. You can never count on him blundering a piece in the sixth hour. This happens to other players but not to him. Whether it is youth, or his incredible physical shape... He doesn't have my psychological lapses either; that sometimes I just collapse. This simply doesn't happen to him. He's an incredibly stable player and that puts him ahead of the other three top players. Chess-wise I have the feeling that you can fight him. Let's put it this way, if the other players are well-rested, and in a good mood, and have a lot of energy, they can fight him on equal terms. The difference is that he always manages this and we don't. Which in a way is also a part of your strength. It's like Kasparov when he was so much ahead of the posse, and his opening preparation was a serious part of it. You cannot say this is not part of the game. So all credit to him; for now he is the best player in the world, I definitely agree with this. But you can fight him, it's not something that cannot be changed in the coming years.'

Do you believe him when he says he doesn't work on chess between tournaments?

'Yes, I believe that he doesn't work intensely on chess. But I am not sure that the others do so much. I can tell you that between Kazan and Dort-

mund I didn't work on chess at all. The times are changing. The opening knowledge of all players is now so huge that you cannot really make a difference in the opening anymore. Even if you work like crazy, even if you're incredibly imaginative in the opening. You can see this recent tendency. Hardly any games are won in the opening now. Even against a lower-rated player, you just don't catch him anymore. Basically, these days you have to win a game with your playing qualities. So maybe Magnus is doing the right thing. He's a very practical player. He is always trying to confuse matters, to put a lot of tension in the game, to set his opponents lots of practical problems. He never really was an opening player and probably never will be. Maybe that is why he always keeps so much energy. He can play for six hours without dropping his level. Maybe this is more important than finding some novelty, which may win you a game or not, and even if you win it, the win may be neutralized within a few days because you're tired. It's not that he doesn't work on chess at all, this is not true of course, and that's not what he means. Actually, I suspect that quite a few players have the same strategy. I can also tell you, it's no secret, that I didn't work so much lately. I worked like crazy before Kazan, like six months. And you see that the results do not got get worse when you work less. These are different times and everyone has to find out how to work on chess. You don't necessarily have to slave for eight hours a day. You think about variations, you check some games, you leave your computer running to check some positions. I believe that this old-fashioned way of digging deeply into positions is not as important anymore. Keeping energy, keeping an appetite for chess, is definitely more important these days.'

The match Kasparov would like to see now is one between Carlsen and Aronian. How do you assess Aronian?

'I think I assess all four top players in the same way. Or let's say three of them. If we are in the best possible shape, physically and mentally, we are pretty equal between ourselves and also with Magnus. If Aronian was to play a match against Magnus, it would be a completely open match if he manages to be physically fit. He has lapses of energy, he is not so young anymore. He's described as a young player, but don't forget he is close to 30 already. But he is a very original player. He is maybe a little less stable than Carlsen, but he is a very strong player. When he catches his wave he is incredibly powerful. He is a very confident player, which is both good and bad. He is prone to overestimating his position, but if you're in good shape this helps you to show an even better result than your position warrants. On the other hand, it may lose you games when you're in worse form. But it's clear that he is an elite player and one of the main challengers for the world title in the near future.'

Anand's current position is hard to assess. He may be preparing for the world championship match, but I don't think he dropped below 2800 on purpose. What happened to him?

'I can tell you it is difficult psychologically to play tournaments before a match. I experienced it pretty often. I think it's a sign that he is not yet ready. He should mainly change something in his head. I am pretty sure he is going to do it, because he is an experienced player and he understands everything. Only he knows exactly what happened. What was pretty obvious was that he was not taking too much risk. And his game is one of risking, even being provocative, going for worse positions in a sharp, calculating game. This is his main strength, and when he is not going for it, he wins very few games. In two tournaments he just won one game. It also could mean that he was trying something, that he wanted to see how he would fare if he played a different type of chess. In that case it was a clear indication that it didn't really work. Or maybe it was something psychological, that he was not ready to take big risks. But whatever it is, it is clear that he should change his game if he wants to win a world championship match and if he still wants to fight for first place in any tournament which, going by his strength, he obviously still can.'

The match Anand is going to play against Gelfand is not seen as the strongest clash one could think of today. You've also played matches that people were critical of. How unpleasant is this for the players?

'It is quite unpleasant. At least it was to me. Both of them fully deserve to play this match, they won what they had to win. It doesn't matter whether they are the best by rating now or not. We should forget about this. At Wimbledon, sometimes the top two players meet in the final, sometimes an unexpected player makes it. Which doesn't mean that the final is without any interest. I can understand the people who want to see the 'hottest' players playing for the world championship, but this does not always happen and it is not their fault. Lately we have been getting to a more or less solid world championship system. The ones who win under the system are the best and there should not be any complaints. But I know, I was also in this situation. Some people with strong ties to one of my former colleagues were trying to pretend that if I am not the best player, I am no longer the World Champion. I don't think this is right or even moral. The World Champion is not necessarily the one who is the best player at any given moment. There is an incredible amount of examples like this in the past. I think we should stop this discussion. I can assure you that they will show something totally different from what they were showing in Tal. It's a world championship match and they will both have a lot of motivation. Anand will go for very sharp chess, that's my prediction. I'm not involved

in this match at all, but I am sure we are going to see some very interesting fighting chess.'

And your advice to Anand and Gelfand would be to totally ignore this discussion...

'Of course they don't think about it day and night, but I know from my own experience after my match with Kasparov that it annoys you. I was still playing well, then I had a period when I was not at my best, but I definitely still was one of the best players in the world, still in the top-three by rating. I was still World Champion and then many people were trying to kind of disqualify me just because I was not number one. You feel insulted and I was too young to take it in my stride. That's maybe why my results became even worse, it put pressure on me. Only later, with some bad experience, with this illness, I changed my philosophy, and now I don't care at all about all this. I understood that I shouldn't care, but I failed to ignore it because I was too young. They are both experienced, and I am sure they will manage to put it from their minds. But I understand that it's annoying.'

Which takes us to you. You may have done badly at the Tal Memorial, but at the tournaments that you won in 2011, Dortmund, Hoogeveen and London, you impressed. In what phase of your career are you?

'I am obviously in the phase that I enjoy chess. That is really true. I can tell you I now probably like playing chess more than ever. I still have ambitions, but I think less about the result. I really want to win this Candidates' tournament. I am not the main favourite but I have my chances and under certain circumstances I can do it. But the main point is that I like to play chess, and in this sense I am fully happy with my career at the moment. As for results, this year was maybe stranger than any other year in my career, because it was so up and down. Now I have to understand what makes me play well and what makes me play badly. It is clear that if I manage to get myself in the kind of shape I was in in Dortmund or Hoogeveen or London, then I have real chances to win the Candidates' tournament.'

The fifth non-Englishman in London was Nakamura. After he won Wijk aan Zee you were very appreciative of his changed approach. How do you assess him at the moment?

'It's hard to say. In general this year was not a success for him, strangely enough. In Wijk aan Zee he was showing very good chess and it seemed to me that he was really getting to the top-five. Maybe I am wrong, but it seems to me that he and Garry were just not the right match. Chess-wise Garry gave him a lot, of course. It is clear that Wijk aan Zee was part of the boost which he got after they started working together. But then

there apparently was some tension, as far as I understood, which ended their relationship. Besides all the positive things which Garry can give on the chess board, it was probably not working on a human level. This sometimes happens. And you could see, after they broke up Hikaru started to do better immediately (laughs). That sounds like a joke, but it's true. Maybe at some point it became a burden to him. Maybe he got too tense. I don't know who is to be blamed, it just happens sometimes. But in general I can see that he is trying very hard. Last year was not very reassuring, but let's see what happens. Of course he is talented and has potential, but we have to admit that at the moment he is not yet on the level of Carlsen or Aronian. He can beat anyone in one game, win tournaments, but all in all he still has to improve to be on their level.'

One of the reasons you may have felt badly after the Tal Memorial is the backing you get from the Russian Chess Federation. They gave you a suite on the executive floor in the Ritz Carlton, catered to all your wishes. In such luxury it must be tough to disappoint them.

'Not at all. First of all, they are taking care like this of all Russian top players. I am not the only one. There is nothing exclusive for me, that would be a misunderstanding. There is no additional pressure, as it is an individual tournament. When you are playing for a team, there may be some additional pressure, because you want to do well. Perhaps there is a little bit more responsibility when you play in Moscow, that may be true, but I should know how to deal with it. It cannot be an explanation for my bad play. I just feel happy that they do a lot. Not only for top players. They also do a lot for kids. They send trainers, there are stipends even for very young players, which we have not seen since Soviet times. They are organizing more and more tournaments in Moscow, and they are excellently organized, as you have seen. I would like to give them something in return, which I hope I will. I am playing for the team and am going to play in the next Olympiad. I also worked, for free of course, with some young kids, gave them some lectures. I would like to win the Olympiad in Turkey, to give something back in deeds, not in words. For me the second most important tournament after the Candidates' is the Olympiad. I am really looking forward to winning it. Now we have a new trainer, Yuri Dokhoian. I spoke with him, we had a good conversation and he is very eager to show a good result and to win it. He is terribly motivated. I think we can do it and I hope we will manage.'

NEW IN CHESS

'I like logical explanations. I don't like emotional demagoguery, which I think Kasparov sometimes resorts to.'

Do you think it is an improvement to have Yuri Dokhoian?

'Yes, to me he is the best trainer we can have at the moment. First of all he was the trainer of Garry and Garry was not doing badly at all in this period (laughs). He was also successful with the Russian women. Wherever he worked he showed great results. Of course there is no guarantee, but at least under the circumstances he is the best choice. I didn't know he was going to do it; I was not consulted. But I told the federation that if they had consulted me, I would have said it was the right choice. You can talk about a person if he is potentially good, but all that counts is the performance of a trainer, and so far his performance as a trainer was just brilliant.'

What is your analysis of the lack of success in the past years of the Russian team?

'In fact, I would rather not make my views public. I spoke about it a lot with Yuri, because he wanted to know my private opinion. I told him my guesses, and I don't know if he will consider them or not. That's his business. He's the trainer, not me. Maybe I will talk about it later, but not now, as it can only do damage. It will do the team no good. As in football, I think that a player doesn't have the moral right to speak out about such matters. Only the trainer can speak about this, not the players.'

I can also imagine that you're reluctant to speak about it, as Evgeny Bareev, the previous trainer, is a good friend of yours?

'No, no, not at all, that has nothing to do with it. It's not about if some players or trainers may get insulted. But first of all, if we want to improve something, why should our opponents know about it? And secondly I think

it's just a moral taboo. You shouldn't do this as a player. I don't see what positive effect it can bring to a team.'

Arkady Dvorkovich, the head of the advisory board of the Russian Federation, told me there has been an attempt to involve Kasparov in the training of the Russian team. Could you see that happen?

'Well, why not? Of course I could see that happen. It's only that it's terribly expensive (laughs). There is no problem at all. I can tell you that Garry was invited to play in the Botvinnik Memorial, he was invited to come to the Tal Memorial, he is invited everywhere. He is just always refusing. I don't know why. He's invited all the time and if he was involved in the training of our team, I am sure everybody would be very happy about it. For some strange reason he prefers to train foreign players (laughs). You should ask him why he doesn't want to, but of course he is welcome in Russia. I fully agree with Arkady in his interview that there is absolutely no politics about it. He is always very welcome, to come and comment at the Tal Memorial, to be a guest of honour. That he never shows up is his wish. I saw a Russian interview with him where he was telling that he hasn't earned money in Russia lately. But it's not because he can't, it's because he doesn't want to. You cannot make this a political thing, he is treated very well by the Russian Federation, I can assure you.'

Kasparov presented you with the trophy in London. I guess you exchanged some words. Did you just speak about chess?

'Yes, we exchanged some words about chess. Well, OK, I can explain my attitude towards him. We are different people and in many areas we have different opinions. So I don't see us do something together. Not for personal reasons, but because we have a very different mentality. But I don't have any personal problem with him. He is an absolutely great player, and there is no problem for me to speak with him. I'm like this, I always say what I think. It's never intended to offend him. I would be very glad to have a discussion, if he also tells openly why he disagrees with me. I would not take it as an offence at all. But I don't want these things to become personal. Secondly, I like logical explanations. I don't like emotional demagoguery, which, I am sorry, but which I think he sometimes resorts to. I'd like him to logically explain his position. Then I am fully ready for a discussion. I can assure you, I don't see him as my enemy at all. I don't know what is his position in this, I'm not sure if it's the same (laughs), but I am totally fine with him. I was pretty glad to receive a trophy from him. We have been together in chess for such a long time. I was in his school, I was helping him in his match in '95, we have a long history. And even if we are very different, after all we are both quite significant chess players of the past few decades.

We definitely have something in common. And it will not go away.'

A lot is happening in Russia these days. Where do you stand politically?
'Nowhere. I think what's happening now is a positive thing. When I analyse it, to me it is a society that's starting to wake up. Society is asking for more than the people in power are giving it. I think that in the past there was an unwritten pact or contract between the people and those in power. Generally speaking the people were saying, you give us food, you give us economic growth, we'll start to live better. Yes, television is a bit controlled, this and that, I wouldn't say there was no democracy at all, but of course it is not a full democracy. But they were not really complaining and they were supporting the people in power. But now we see the first obvious sign that the people are saying, we don't want this anymore, we want a new contract. We want more freedom, we want to be more involved in political life. To me this is a very positive sign and a step forward. What would be bad is if one of the following two scenarios takes place. One, if the people in power will not respond adequately. They will have to find a consensus, they have to give more freedom, they have to listen to the people. If they manage this, it will just lead to a better society and a better life. The second danger is that behind this protest movement there are certain forces, which we have already seen, that will try to make a mess of it. Who will try to create some Arab Spring, which would be very bad for the country. There are also very unpleasant nationalist forces which start to raise their voices behind these thousands of people who took to the streets. But if these two scenarios will not happen, it's a very positive thing. So let's wait and see. I am not involved in it and have the possibility to look at it with a sober eye and from a distance.'

You're looking at it from France, but still it's clear that you're very much tied to your country emotionally. Do you feel first and foremost Russian, or also a bit French? Or European?
'I care about the situation in the world in general, which is pretty dangerous. I don't like at all what is going on, in Europe, in the world. It's pretty worrying. But maybe Russia is my main concern. I care a lot about Russia, but also about Europe. If something bad happens in Europe it's as painful for me as it were in Russia.'

How Russian is your home in Paris? Do you feed your daughter blini's or borsht?
'No, the only thing that is Russian is that I try to speak Russian with her. At the moment her Russian is not great, but she is trying and it's already getting a bit better. She was baptized in an orthodox church and she has a Russian name. It's obvious that she is going to be French first. Her first language is French, she has a French passport, a French mother. But what I also want is that she will be at least partly Russian. I'll do everything to makes sure that she will have some part of Russian culture.'

> 'The people are saying, we don't want this anymore, we want a new contract'

I remember you telling me on the eve of the match against Kasparov how important it was for you to be with your friends in Russia. Talk Russian, be in an atmosphere that you believed foreigners could not understand.
'That's still true. I have very many Russian speaking friends in Paris. I'm still fully in the Russian buzz. I'm checking mainly Russian news. I know much more about what is happening in Russia in all spheres of society, but I am also totally integrated in French society and I am glad about that. I am a happy person who can say that he has two homes, and it's really true. I feel totally at home in Paris and I feel totally at home with Russians.'

You're 36 now and still in the middle of your career. There have been moments when you hinted that maybe somewhere around 40 you might think of quitting. Do you have any thoughts of what you might do afterwards?
'The only thing I can tell is that I might do many different things. I am a social person, I still have energy. It can be inside the chess world, outside the world of chess, I'm sure I'll find something. I have many friends and there already have been people who offered me a job and I don't think it was just out of politeness. For the moment I don't think about it that much. First of all I enjoy chess and secondly I can still play well. Maybe not every tournament, but at least every second tournament (laughs). I can still play chess on a very high level for a few more years, I'd say from two to five years. Then we'll see, that's quite a serious amount of time.'

But it's not very likely that you will follow in Kasparov's and Karpov's footsteps and do something political?
'Not in their way, for sure. Not in so-called public politics. In general I don't very much like to give speeches, I prefer to *do* things; that is my attitude in life. If I can be helpful for some concrete projects, let's say if I could be of help to develop a certain area in Russia, I wouldn't exclude it completely, although I'd say that politics is not really my cup of tea. But it can be business or any other field. Let's see.'

You're not going to run for FIDE president?
'(Laughs) I don't think so. Unless no one else is running.' ■

Stills from *Grossmejster*: Max Euwe congratulates the Soviet team at the Olympad in Skopje (authentic footage)

A move that made it into the movies

Chess in the movies mostly offers a teeth-gnashing spectacle of unlikely heroes, ridiculously contorted faces and absurd mates in one. A rare exception is the Soviet film *Grossmejster* (1972), which few of our readers will have seen. Some of the actors are genuine grandmasters and the chess looks authentic, too. So authentic that it is tempting to look for the real genius behind the brilliant attacking game in the final scenes. **Mihail Marin** unravels the mystery of a star move that enjoyed a brief movie career.

Tal, Kortchnoi and Hlebnikov on a plane; Alexander Kotov comments on the final game in the studio; Viktor Kortchnoi in the audience

We all need to believe in fairy tales. With so many reasons for disappointment offered by real life, occasional refuge into an ideal world is absolutely necessary.

Centuries ago, chess used to be well suited for such purposes. Remember, for instance, the oriental legend of the beautiful and clever Dilaram.

Things are different in the modern era. Many other sports claim the supremacy in the public's attention. We have the *Karate Kid* and *Rocky* series, or the *Escape to Victory* movie, where football is tightly woven into the main drama. Chess has become a Cinderella, being allowed to pop up in just occasional scenes, as in, for instance, *From Russia with Love*.

There is an old movie, though, in which chess *is* the main subject. For reasons that will be explained at the end of the article, it is virtually unknown. It is titled *Grossmejster* and was produced by the Lenfilm studio in the Soviet Union (where else?) in 1972.

The movie represented some sort of ideological must. In the remote city of Reykjavik, the Soviet machine had just lost the supreme title to an eccentric and solitary American, and the nation had to be promised revenge.

The movie follows the life of a young boy, irresistibly in love with chess, who becomes a grandmaster and then a World title Candidate. The adult player is interpreted by a well-known actor, Andrei Miagkov, who looks more like a cute schoolboy rather than a fierce killer, something that many people thought about Anatoly Karpov during his 1974 Candidates' match.

For a chess player of our times, the movie becomes really interesting after about 50 minutes, when a series of grandmaster figures, interpreted by themselves, enter the scene. Most of them play cameo parts only: Alexander Kotov as a TV commentator, Mark Taimanov examining the game on a huge demonstration board and Mikhail Tal as the main figure in the press centre.

This is not the case with Viktor Kortchnoi, though. Viktor (as he is always referred to in the movie) is Hlebnikov's trusted second and friend during his titanic quest. Although Hlebnikov is supposed to be the main hero, the final part of the movies is clearly dominated by Kortchnoi's personality. His acting is impressive and one wonders whether the whole movie was not made with the sole purpose of paying homage to him.

'It is all about one move, the move deciding the victory'

The dramatic tension increases when the main part of the Candidates' Final ends in a tie. According to the rules, the match has to be continued until the first decisive game. Hlebnikov will have black in the first playoff game. The scene of his preparation, taking place the evening before, starts with the following explanation from Viktor: 'This was repeatedly played by Petrosian against Spassky; it is a very solid and reliable setup. You know, tomorrow you should avoid any risky experiments.' Feeling that Hlebnikov does not quite share his state of mind, he adds that a draw with black would suit him well; after that he can try to win with white. The final result depends on one game, after all.

The ulterior course of events proved Hlebnikov's answer to be prophetical: 'It is all about one move, the move deciding the victory, my faith and the country's prestige!'

The next day, the huge theatre where the final is going to be played (we recognize the Hall of Columns in Moscow) proves too small for the huge audience; something quite normal in the Soviet Union in those years. A huge demonstration board is installed outside, and thousands of people follow the moves standing shoulder to shoulder. It looks as if the whole country is connected to the game in a way or another, through television, radio, or direct visual contact.

Just before the start of the game, we finally meet Hlebnikov's opponent. Not much is said about him, but everything suggests that he is from a Western country. He puffs a pipe, has distinguished facial traces and his outlook is clearly 'aristocratic-bourgeois', a contradictory term, defining something that any good Soviet citizen was supposed to despise wholeheartedly. Maybe it is only my subjective impression, but he seems to have something in common with Alekhine, in the final years of his life. It would make sense after all. Fischer was too recent a figure to have become a symbol, and he was also just an American; but Alekhine was much more suggestive from many points of view. The first Soviet World Champion, but actually an immigrant, a

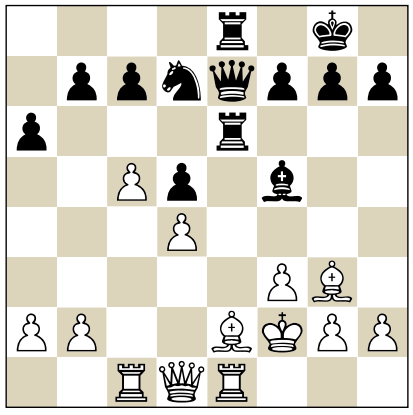
The final game is played in the Hall of Columns in Moscow

Kotov approaches the critical moment

pure Russian, but then 'just' an aristocrat, an imposing personality who did not know how to row the boat of his life properly through the tumultuous ocean of the interbellum and Word War II years...

Opponent
Sergey Hlebnikov
Candidates' Final, 1972 (?!)

We get to know that the game starts with 1.d4 d5, but then we quickly get to the first critical position. Judging from the numbers displayed below the demonstration board, it is Black's turn to play his 20th move.



Having arrived at a crossroads, Hlebnikov now sinks into prolonged thought. Black has an active position, but his c7 pawn is hanging. If he spends a tempo on defending it, the inevitable exchanges after ♕d2 and ♗f1 will most likely lead to a draw. 'Viktor would be happy', he thinks, but he nevertheless keeps looking for alternatives.

Outside, on the streets, the public vividly comments on the position. 'He needs to attack: immediately and without any hesitation: ...b7-b5!' is the opinion of a huge guy. 'What about the a6 pawn?' his much smaller neighbour asks. 'We sacrifice it!' insists the big hunk. The little guy remains sceptical: 'It does not look sound'. 'Not sound, not sound', mimics the big guy...

20...♕g5!

This unexpected move, preventing White's planned ♕d2 and threatening with ...h5-h4, provokes a wide range of reactions. 'Did I not tell you?' rejoiced the big guy, taking his neighbour by the shoulders. Taimanov answers the question 'how do you assess this pawn sacrifice?' very diplomatically: 'We will know more about it tomorrow...' In the press centre, Tal immediately turns his chess board around, so that he sees the position from Black's side, and this is the most suggestive assessment of the whole scene.

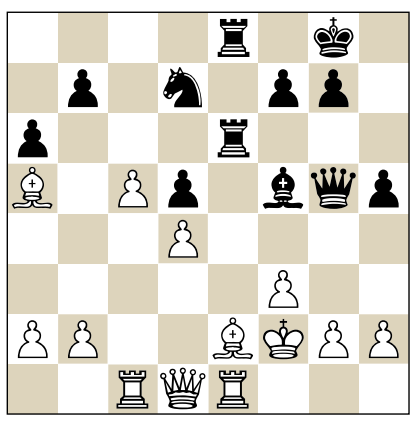
Meanwhile, Viktor has joined the audience in the playing hall. During the final sequence of the game, his facial expression remains imperturbable, although some would call it petrified.

21.♗xc7

Otherwise, White risks getting the worse of it, without any material compensation.

21...h5 22.♗a5

This looks like a clever regrouping. White renews the threat of connecting his rooks with ♕d2.



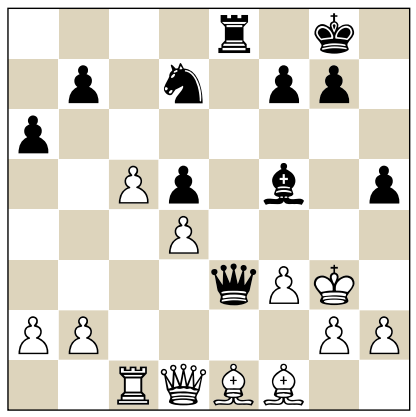
> 'Not sound, not sound', mimics the big guy...'

22...♗h3!

A simple tactical blow with a strong impact on the dynamic balance. The bishop is taboo because of ...♕e3+ and ...♖g6(+), played in either order. In order to parry the threats, White needs to offer the rooks' exchange one move earlier than he had wished to.

23.♗f1 ♖xe1 24.♗xe1 ♕e3+ 25.♔g3 ♗f5

The first attack has been repelled, but White's king has been forced to advance to an exposed square. The next move is natural, but not the best.



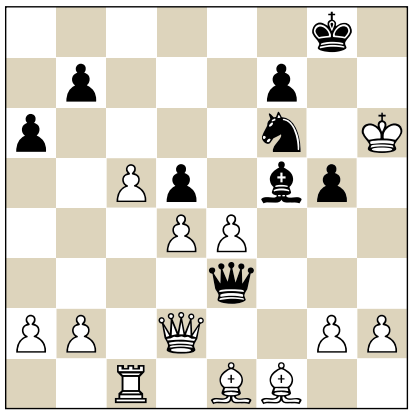
26.h4?

Preventing ...h4+, but losing an important tempo.

The only adequate defence would have been 26.♕d2, but it is not easy to foresee that the following scary variation leads only to a draw: 26...h4+ 27.♔xh4 ♖e4+ 28.fxe4 g5+ 29.♔h5 ♘f6+ 30.♔h6.

Viktor Kortchnoi takes notes

Moving chess pieces illustrate Hlebnikov's thoughts

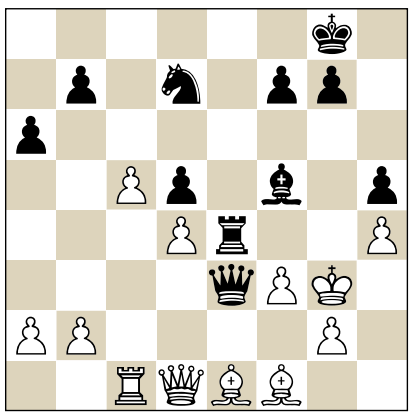


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

The king has advanced deep into the wolf's throat, but is very much alive yet. Black has nothing better than a perpetual with 30...♘g4+ 31.♔h5 ♘f6+.

26...♖e4!

Black brings new forces into the fight, threatening ...♕f4+, followed by ...♖xd4 and ...♕xh4+. Could a Candidates' finalist have overlooked such a simple move?



27.♕d2!

Not quite! After playing this subtle defence, *his opponent* (who will remain nameless until the end of this titanic battle), gets up and starts walking, while confidently puffing his pipe. True, the last move overloads the e1-bishop, allowing some simple tactics, but indirectly defends the important d4 pawn.

With only 20 minutes left on the clock to reach the 40th move, Hlebnikov starts looking for a winning continuation. For a few minutes, the camera focuses on the chess board, and superbly carries out animation follows the variations calculated by our hero.

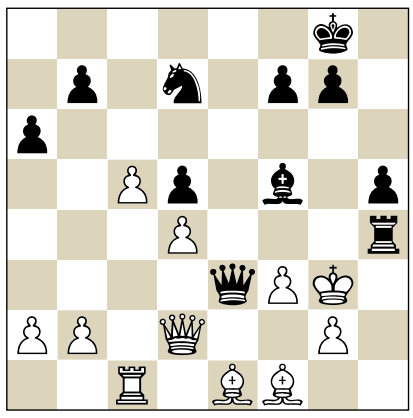
As the seconds are ticking away, people from the audience, including specialists, start asking the same question: 'Why on earth does he not move?' These words acquire a special significance when whispered by Hlebnikov's ex-wife, who had left him when feeling that she could not compete with chess for his affection, but has now come back to support him.

Viktor's neighbour in the audience hall remembers a case in which Hlebnikov had forgotten about the clock in a similar situation. Hlebnikov himself becomes aware of the critical situation he is getting in, thinking, 'Viktor will kill me.'

His flag has begun to rise already, when he suddenly finds *the* move, the one deciding everything. He says to himself: 'Maybe it is wiser to give it up and take the draw by perpetual, but... Well, forgive me, Viktor, forgive me you all!'

27...♖g4+ 28.♔h2 ♖xh4+ 29.♔g3

A draw would be reached with 29...♖g4+, but time had come for true beauty.

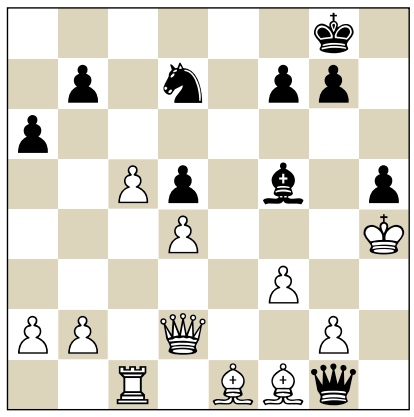


29...♕g1!!

The start of an incredible attacking sequence of five consecutive moves without check, being a clear rook down!

The point behind 27.♕d2 is that after the greedy 29...♕xd2 30.♗xd2 ♖xd4 31.♗c3 ♖a4 32.a3 followed by 33.♗b4, the rook would be caged.

30.♔xh4



30...f6!!

With the double threat ...♕h2 mate and ...g5+, followed by ...h4, mate.

In the press centre Tal had suggested that 30...♕h2+ 31.♔g5 f6+ 32.♔xf5 ♔f7, threatening ...g6 mate, would win, but then somebody noticed that 33.g3! would force Black's immediate resignation. The f4-square has become available for the king and the black queen is almost trapped.

31.♔g3

All White's moves are forced.

31...g5 32.f4

Clearing the f3-square.

32...g4

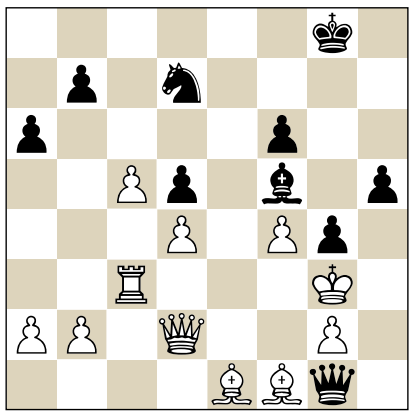
Renewing the threat of 33...h4+ in view of 34.♔xh4 ♕h2 mate.

33.♖c3!

The opponent does not give up the fight so easily. His extra rook is ready to give its life (♖h3) for the king's safety.

The arbiter asks for silence after ...♕g1 has been played

Mikhail Tal in the press room. On the right Alexander Roshal



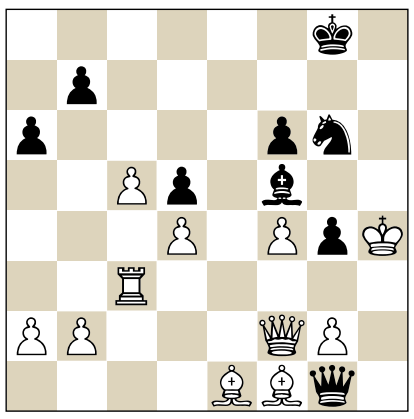
33...♘f8!!

Maybe the most remarkable move of the entire attack. The threat is another move without check, ...♘g6, when ...h4 would become unstoppable. White desperately needs to dismantle the mechanism.

34.♕f2

This is relatively better than 34.♗f2, because at a later moment the f1 bishop will be defended.

34...h4+ 35.♔xh4 ♘g6+



36.♔h5

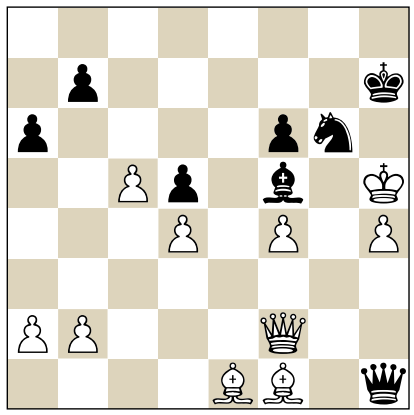
36.♔g3 ♕h1 would lead to immediate mate with 37...♕h4.

36...♕h1+ 37.♖h3 gxh3 38.gxh3 ♔h7!

Another quiet move of terrible force. By defending his knight, Black threatens ...♗xh3.

39.h4

Hlebnikov's flag is hanging on the edge now. With a trembling hand he plays:



39...♕g1!

Threatening ...♕g4 mate. Since 40.♕f3 fails to save White after 40...♘xf4+ 41.♕xf4 ♕g6 mate, *the opponent* tries his last chance: what if Black's flag will finally fall?!

40.♕xg1 ♘xf4

Mate.

The match is over, but the search for the truth is not. Hlebnikov and Viktor miraculously escape from the herd of fans, hiding in a dark corner on a staircase in the big old building. They start analysing the game on a pocket chess set, laughing and affectionately taking each other by the shoulders. Hlebnikov's wife, who has followed them closely, looks at the scene with a mixture of smiles and tears, possibly a sign of acceptance of the cruel fate of having to share the rest of the life with a true genius...

A fantastic game and a perfect fairy-tale, with growing tension, perfect timing and the entire artistic beauty one may think of. One gets curious, though, to know the real elements that may have inspired the story.

With such powerful tools like ChessBase, it is easy to identify the original game: the position from the first diagram above was taken from the game Alatortsev-Kholmov, 16th Soviet Championship, 1948. After this initial discovery, little 'troubles' started popping in.

There is a little cheating with the move numbering: ...♕g5 was actually the 22nd black move. Obviously, the director wanted to make things more exciting by making the mate coincide with the control move. The more intriguing thing is that, after having started the attack correctly, Kholmov did not play the winning 29/31...♕g1!!, and preferred 31...♕e7 instead, which only yielded him a symbolic advantage. So the main question became: who should be credited for finding *the* move?

> 'The main question became: who should be credited for finding the move?'

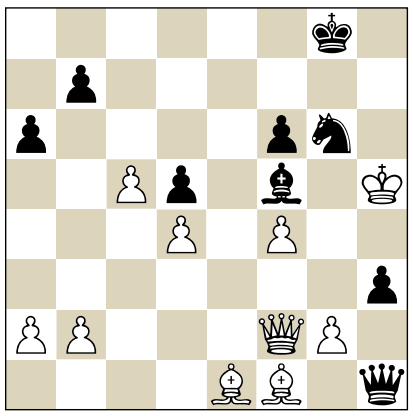
I rushed to the shelf with old tournament books of the Soviet Championships, but bitter disappointment was awaiting me: I had a continuous series from the 17th to the 23rd championships, but the 16th was missing.

I do not get discouraged that easily, and started looking through my old collection of Soviet magazines, searching for at least a small hint. After some climbing efforts and getting my clothes dustier than ever, I was rewarded with an important finding. While checking the second 1949 issue of *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, I saw a familiar position in a small article titled 'The pinned knight cannot move' from the one-page-section 'Readers criticize':

Hlebnikov played by Andrei Miagkov

The 'opponent' observes Hlebnikov after he has played the spectacular ...♕g1

'Mikenas's interesting analysis on the possible end of the game Alatortsev-Kholmov (12th Bulletin of the 16th SSSR championship) leads to the following position after 39 moves:



'After 40.g4 Mikenas gives a win with 40...h2 41.gxf5 ♕g1 42.♗g2 ♕xg2, overlooking, as highlighted by Comrade Kondratiev (Moscow), that after 43.♕xg2 the knight is pinned.
'However, Black wins either with the line given by Com. Kondratiev: 42...♘xf4+ 43.♕xf4 ♕xg2 44.♕b8+ ♔h7 45.♕c7+ ♕g7 46.♕xh2 ♕h6+, or with 42...♕xf2 43.♗xd5+ ♔g7 44.♗xf2 ♘xf4+, followed by 45...♘xd5 and 46...h1♕.'

This line does not actually come up in the movie, but I finally knew the author of this brilliant piece of analysis. And of course, I immediately felt the urge to find the 12th bulletin of the championship.

Failing to find it by myself, I kindly asked Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam for help. Much to our disappointment, there was no copy available at the Max Euwe Centre in Amsterdam, but we still had some hopes in view of Dirk Jan's projected visit to Moscow on the occasion of the 2011 Tal Memorial.

Here is what Dirk Jan reported to me from Moscow: 'And there, with the help of Yuri Averbakh, I think that I have accomplished my mission.

'In the library of the Central Chess Club we first had to discover that no book on the Soviet Championship of 1948 had been published. Yuri laconically said that he was not really surprised, as it was the first championship he had played in and he had no memories of such a book... (He beat Kholmov and lost to Alatortsev, by the way).

'But our search for the bulletins, and more in particular for the 12th issue, was successful, and there I found the article by Mikenas and his analysis of 31...♕g1!, as you can see in the attached file (Yuri kindly held open the book so I could take a photo).'

By coincidence (or maybe not), the fairytale's whirlpool ends in the same way it started: during the filming of *Grossmejster*, Yuri Averbakh had been the main consultant...

The main information provided by Dirk Jan's finding was that Mikenas's analysis (with the exception of his minor flaw) was used in the movie almost completely. A fellow-GM confessed that he was deeply impressed by the fact that the old analysis stands the computer's scrutiny. Since we are in a fairytale now, I would rather exclaim: 'Wow, machines have become so good that they can understand a good piece of old master analysis!'

We now have a few heroes whose acts made up this marvellous tale: Mikenas, Kholmov, Kortchnoi, some young guy resembling Karpov and an older one reminiscent of Alekhine. After some further investigation, I managed to find some game fragments and situations needed to gather the pieces of the puzzle into the whole picture, but also highlighting the differences between real life and fairytales.

The name of Vladas Mikenas used to be widely known in the Soviet Union, as well as in the other Communist countries. In 1987, Fizkultura i Sport published a book with his games and biography in what we used to call 'the thin black-covered collection', dedicated to outstanding Soviet players (not to be confused with 'the black hard-covered collection' reserved for the really great players). Prior to the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet forces in 1940, he could not afford being a chess professional.

Although he never belonged to the highest elite (he became an International Master in 1950), Mikenas occasionally caused major upsets to famous opponents. The following game entirely justifies his reputation as *grandmasters' fright*.

Alexander Alekhine
Vladas Mikenas
Kemeri 1937

To start with, the off-board story accompanying this game is worth making a movie about.

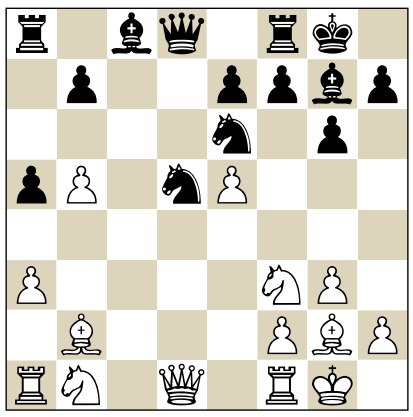
The evening before, Alekhine by chance sat down at the same restaurant table as Mikenas. He was not in a great mood, but when Mikenas suggested that a little drink would make things look better, he rejected categorically: 'No, thank you, I only take milk nowadays. It is precisely because of these damned drinks that I lost my title to Euwe!' Mikenas wished him all the best for the return match, which was scheduled later that year, and this improved Alekhine's mood quite a bit.

When leaving the table, the ex-champion wished his companion good luck for his next game, apparently forgetting that he was going to be his opponent! Being quite superstitious,

Mark Taimanov gives his opinion on the developments

Dutch GM Hein Donner smoking in Skopje

he was very upset when he realized the blunder he had made, and this, according to Mikenas, may have affected his playing strength on the next day.



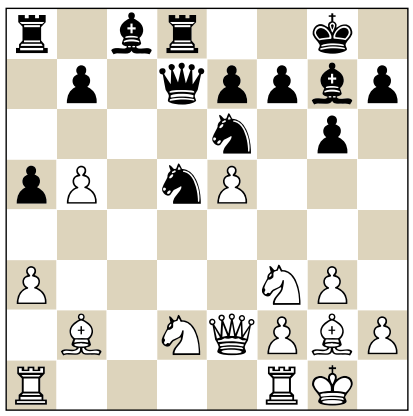
White has carelessly advanced his pawns, providing Black with excellent squares for his knights. Mikenas's next developing moves look a bit unnatural, but prepare a tactical moment that his phenomenal opponent had overlooked completely.

14...♕d7

This seems to bury the bishop alive, at least for a while, but Mikenas had some cunning plans.

15.♕e2 ♖d8 16.♘bd2?

Not suspecting anything yet.



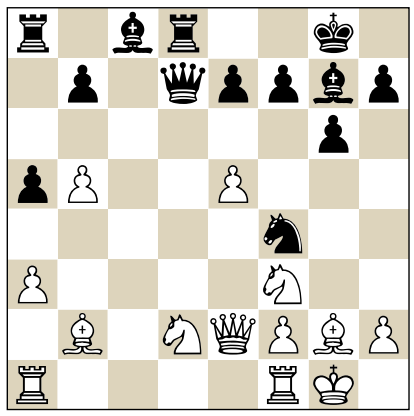
16...♘ef4!!

Suddenly, Black's position reveals its dynamic potential. Alekhine now took 40 minutes before answering. The last move must have come as a big shock for him, since a few moves later he committed a double blunder by allowing a simple win in three and putting a pawn into... his coffee almost at the same time! Pity that the producers of *Grossmejster* did not use this scene somewhere after ...♕g1!

17.♕c4

Mikenas confesses that he was somewhat relieved when Alekhine declined the sacrifice. Although intuitively he felt that the attack after 17.gxf4 ♘xf4 should be very strong, he had not managed to calculate everything. This kind of sincerity is a clear hint of his amateur status. A professional grandmaster of those days would surely claim that he had seen it all until the end!

At the same time, the following variations, fruit of Mikenas's final analysis, have the same accuracy as those in Hlebnikov's final attack.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

18.♕e4 will leave the d2-knight vulnerable. After 18...♕g4 the only reasonable way to defend g2 is 19.♘d4, but then 19...♗xe5 leaves White's pieces hanging, for instance 20.♘2b3 a4, winning material. 18.♕e3 also fails to keep White's minor pieces together after 18...♕g4 19.♘e1 ♖d3 20.♕xd3 ♘xd3 21.♘xd3, and now 21...♕e2 wins a knight, leaving Black with a decisive material advantage.

Finally, 18.♕d1 forces Black to change his attacking pattern a bit, but fails to change the assessment: 18...♘xg2 19.♔xg2 ♕h3+ 20.♔h1 ♗g4 (threatening ...♖xd2) 21.♕b3 a4! It appears that the queen cannot achieve stability along the third rank. 22.♕e3 ♗h6 and Black wins.

> 'Allowing a simple win and putting a pawn into... his coffee!'

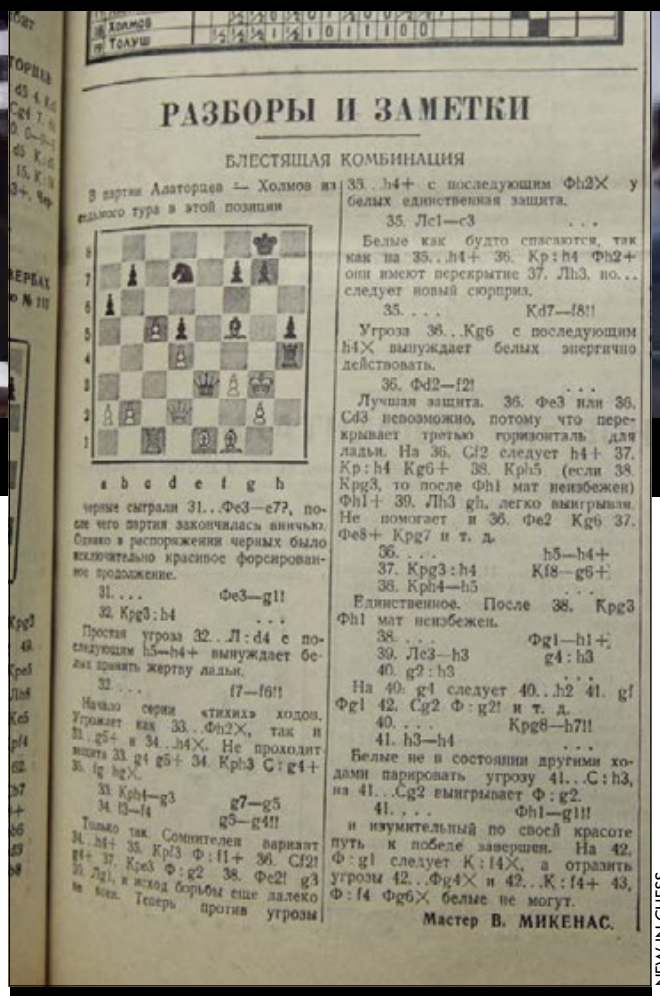
17...♘xg2 18.♔xg2 ♕h3+ 19.♔h1 ♗e6

Black has a strong light-squared bishop and the initiative. Although Mikenas failed to exploit Alekhine's aforementioned blunder a couple of moves later, he went on to win a good endgame.

There is little doubt that this game, taken together with the surrounding drama, is comparable to Hlebnikov's masterpiece. In fact, the movie hero faced somebody who only looked a bit like Alekhine, whereas Mikenas played against the 'genuine' one. However, the real life episode has a strong limitation: the game could hardly be regarded as decisive, since Mikenas ended the tournament somewhere halfway the table. Instead of qualifying and starting the preparation for the supreme title match, as Hlebnikov is supposed to have done, Mikenas had to return to his modest job at the Ministry of Communication in Kaunas.

We surely see further by climbing on the shoulders of existing giants, and Mikenas could not have produced his

Tal likes Black and turns around the board



РАЗБОРЫ И ЗАМЕТКИ

БЛЕСТЯЩАЯ КОМБИНАЦИЯ

В партии Аланторцев — Холмов из седьмого тура в этой позиции

a b c d e f g h

черные сыграли 31...Фе3—с7?, после чего партия закончилась вничью. Однако в распоряжении черных было включительно красивое форсированное продолжение.

31. . . . Фе3—g1!
32. Крg3 : h4 . . .

Простая угроза 32...Л : d4 с последующим h5—h4+ вынуждает белых принять жертву ладьи.

32. . . . f7—f6!!

Начало серии «тихих» ходов. Угрожает как 33...Фh2×, так и 33...g5+ и 34...h4×. Не проходит защита 33. g4 g5+ 34. Крh3 С : g4+ 35. fg hg×.

33. Крh4—g3 g7—g5
34. f3—f4 g5—g4!!

Только так. Сомнителен вариант 34...h4+ 35. Крf3 Ф : f1+ 36. Сf2! g4+ 37. Крe3 Ф : g2 38. Фе2! g3 39. Лg1, и исход борьбы еще далеко не ясен. Теперь против угрозы 35...h4+ с последующим Фh2× у белых единственная защита.

35. Лc1—c3 . . .

Белые как будто спасаются, так как на 35...h4+ 36. Кр : h4 Фh2+ они имеют перекрытие 37. Лh3, но... следует новый сюрприз.

35. . . . Кd7—f8!!

Угроза 36...Кg6 с последующим h4× вынуждает белых энергично действовать.

36. Фd2—f2! . . .

Лучшая защита. 36. Фе3 или 36. Сd3 невозможно, потому что перекрывает третью горизонталь для ладьи. На 36. Сf2 следует h4+ 37. Кр : h4 Кg6+ 38. Крh5 (если 38. Крg3, то после Фh1 мат неизбежен) Фh1+ 39. Лh3 gh, легко выигрывая. Не помогает и 36. Фе2 Кg6 37. Фе8+ Крg7 и т. д.

36. . . . h5—h4+
37. Крg3 : h4 Кf8—g6+
38. Крh4—h5 . . .

Единственное. После 38. Крg3 Фh1 мат неизбежен.

38. . . . Фg1—h1+
39. Ле3—h3 g4 : h3
40. g2 : h3 . . .

На 40. g1 следует 40...h2 41. g! Фg1 42. Сg2 Ф : g2! и т. д.

40. . . . Крg8—h7!!
41. h3—h4 . . .

Белые не в состоянии другими ходами парировать угрозу 41...С : h3, на 41...Сg2 выигрывает Ф : g2.

41. . . . Фh1—g1!!

и изумительный по своей красоте путь к победе завершен. На 42. Ф : g1 следует К : f4×, а отразить угрозы 42...Фg4× и 42...К : f4+ 43. Ф : f4 Фg6× белые не могут.

Мастер В. МИКЕНАС.

NEW IN CHESS

The article by Vladas Mikenas that appeared in the 12th bulletin of the 1948 Soviet Championship, photographed in the library of the Central Chess Club in Moscow.

A happy Hlebnikov after his win

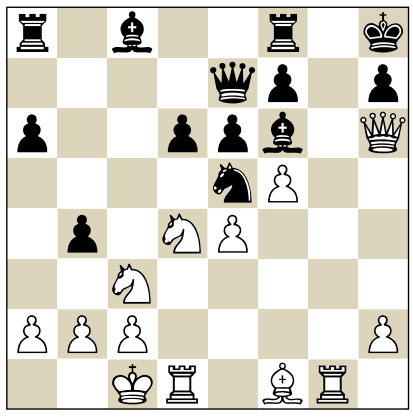
brilliant piece of analysis starting with ...♕g1!! if Kholmov had not launched the brave attack with 22...♕g5. We can also say that Kholmov failed where Hlebnikov succeeded, which made me curious to see how the former used to deal with decisive encounters.

Ratmir Kholmov doubtlessly achieved higher sporting laurels than Mikenas. He was a grandmaster, played very deep chess, defeated many strong players (including Fischer), and even tied for first in the Soviet Championship once. However, just like his co-author on the Hlebnikov masterpiece, he was confined to publishing his selected games in the 'thin black collection', meaning that he was one big step behind the Soviet stars of the first magnitude. The next episode may offer an explanation for this partial limitation.

The 24th Soviet Championship, held in Moscow 1957, has entered the history as Tal's first major success. In the penultimate round, Tal played against Kholmov, who badly needed to win one of the last games in order to achieve the Grandmaster norm. After a tough fight, the game simplified into an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops and rooks. The position did not offer any perspective for a win to either side, so Tal took the liberty of offering a draw. Much to his surprise, Kholmov took a whole hour before accepting it. Asked by his opponent what he had been thinking about, Kholmov answered: 'About how to win against Bronstein... tomorrow.'

I remember that when I read this story for the first time, my heart suddenly started beating more strongly. There is the following famous Kholmov-Bronstein game; would it be possible that in real life self-programming works out so well?

Ratmir Kholmov
David Bronstein
Kiev 1964



Black has wonderful control on the dark squares, but is slightly underdeveloped. Kholmov started a crushing attack with:

18.♘c6!! ♘xc6 19.e5!

Clearing the e4-square and the d3-h7 diagonal. He went on to win brilliantly, and his comments are just as accurate as Mikenas's.

This game has been published so many times that it would be clearly redundant to mention it here more than briefly.

If this was a movie, then the game would have been played at the 24th Championship, indeed. In real life, things rarely synchronize so well, and the game was played only seven years after the episode narrated by Tal. Back in 1957, Kholmov simply achieved a winning endgame with a pawn up, but hesitated in time-trouble and drew. It is not easy to be 'a Hlebnikov' at the crunch point, and maybe this was what Kholmov missed in order to get into the hard-cover category...

Finally, we have the Kortchnoi issue. In the late '60s and early '70s, this amazing player enjoyed wide popularity and high esteem in the Soviet chess world. His photos, interviews and comments were published quite frequently, and his selection for such an important part in the movie is also quite suggestive.

However, by 1972 the officials may have thought that Kortchnoi's best time as a player had gone, and that time had come for him to pass on his knowledge to the new generations. This is precisely his position in the movie, and an idea may have been launched that he help Karpov before and during the forthcoming match against Fischer.

History thought differently, though, and so did Kortchnoi. During the following decade, he did have very intense chess contacts with Karpov, but they could hardly be regarded as 'friendly'. After his defection to the West, the Soviet magazines reporting on the Karpov-Kortchnoi matches only referred to the latter as to 'the challenger' or *the opponent*, a term we have been using a lot when commenting Hlebnikov's game.

Understandably, *Grossmejster* did not run in the cinemas for too long either... ■

Andrey Volokitin won € 20,000 and a BSG ecological motorbike

DAVID LLADA

San Sebastian

Two games and twice the fun

New Year tournaments have always been a popular phenomenon. After all, there are worse ways to spend your Christmas holidays than playing chess. That said, the tournament that started in San Sebastian in the final week of 2011 and ended in the first week of 2012 might still safely be called unique. Celebrating the legendary San Sebastian tournaments of 1911 and 1912, it introduced the 'Basque System', a knock-out format in which every round consists of two games played simultaneously, one with the white and one with the black pieces. **David Llada** reports.

Even people not so familiar with the history of chess have probably heard about the city of San Sebastian. Blessed with one of the most impressive bays in Europe, Donostia – as the locals prefer to call it in their native Basque language – is a popular tourist resort, renowned not only for its

sea views, but specially for its culinary attractions. Within a few kilometres, you can find several of the highest-ranked restaurants in the whole world.

For chess historians, San Sebastian is the place where a young Jose Raul Capablanca first set foot in Europe, back in 1911. Due to a lack of previous international results, the 22-year-old Cuban in fact did not qualify under the tournament rules (which required at least two fourth places in international tournaments), but the debutant brilliantly rewarded the trust the organizers had put in him. In the first round he trounced his loudest critic Osip Bernstein, and keeping a confident pace he went on to win first prize, suffering only one loss, against Akiba Rubinstein, who finished in second place.

In 1912 a second tournament was held in San Sebastian. Capablanca agreed to play again, but withdrew at the last moment. This time Rubinstein was victorious, half a point ahead of Aaron Nimzowitsch and Rudolf Spielmann.

The historical merits of these two tournaments cannot be overestimated. They may be seen as the very first 'super-tournaments' as we know them today. Organized by Jacques Mieses, who also wrote the tournament books, they laid the foundation for the modern organization of chess tournaments. All participants, with the exception of Capablanca, were invited in accordance with strict and objective criteria, and for the first time all participants got their travel expenses paid. On top of that, there was an impressive prize-fund: the winner would get 5,000 Francs, an amount equivalent to roughly €70,000 these days, according to my own, perhaps not very precise, calculations.

> 'My old friend Mig Greengard even congratulated us "for inventing a new way to play chess worse".'

The centenary of these historic events deserved to be celebrated. However, as the current economic situation made it impossible to organize two events in two consecutive years, we decided to hold one commemorating both tournaments during the final days of 2011 and the first days of 2012.

DAVID LLADA

Felix Izeta, the creative sponsor of the tournament, did well in the early rounds, but was eliminated by top-seed Vugar Gashimov in Round 3.

The initiative for the centenary event was, once again, taken by retired GM Felix Izeta, who also supported the San Sebastian tournament in the summer of 2009 won by Hikaru Nakamura (see New In Chess 2009/6). Now a successful businessman who moved to London a few years ago, Izeta maintains warm ties with both his beloved Basque Country, and with many of his former colleagues. As he puts it himself: 'It is a way to give back to chess part of what chess gave to me.' Thus, one of the latest companies he invested in, BSG-electrics, a brand of electric and ecological motorcycles, became the main sponsor of the event.

Felix is a very creative person. He wanted to leave his imprint on the tournament and come up with something special and worth remembering. The result is what he proudly christened the 'Basque System': a combination of a knock-out system in which the players who get eliminated will keep playing in a parallel group, and matches consisting not of two games alternating colours, but played at the same time.

The suggestion of playing both games simultaneously was my personal contribution to the tournament. Still, I am far from being the one to be credited for the invention. I got the idea from Professor Ignacio Palacios Huerta, from the London School of Economics (specialized in fields like Games Theory, Psychology applied to Economics, and Decision Making), who gave a speech during the Grand Slam Final in Bilbao in 2010. Ignacio shared with us the results of some very interesting research, in which he demonstrated the importance of having the white pieces in the first game in a chess match. According to

his research, due to the psychological advantage of the initiative, *'when two players play a series of chess games against one another, alternating who plays with the white pieces, the player who plays with the white pieces in the first game wins more matches than the player who plays with the white pieces in the even games, to a rate of 60/40%'*. And, the smaller the difference in strength between the players, the more clearly this phenomenon asserts itself.

When we were discussing this issue, my colleague Dirk Poldauf of the German magazine *Schach*, suggested that in order to avoid that advantage, maybe two games should be played at the same time. And this suggestion brought to mind some talks I had had with David Bronstein many years ago. He was very much in favour of playing more than one game simultaneously and played several exhibition matches against the likes of Mikhail Tal and Rafael Vaganian over six and eight boards. He even inspired Joop van Oosterom to organize a tournament in Rotterdam in 1990 in which matches were played at six boards! The event was won by John van der Wiel, who defeated Paul van der Sterren in the final.

Sadly, we couldn't bring David Bronstein back to play in Donostia, but many others responded to our call. Despite it being Christmas time, and despite the fact that the tournament was announced only a few months in advance, 80 players from 18 countries visited us, forming a strong field that included 10 players rated above the 2700 mark. The main favourites – Gashimov, Mamedyarov, Ponomariov, Moiseenko and Bacrot – advanced through the first rounds without any difficulties. As Moiseenko said, 'Practice shows that weaker players rarely get extra chances playing unusual chess against strong opponents.'

Probably the most exciting clashes were the ones in the quarter-final, where the eventual finalist, Viktor Laznicka, defeated top-seed Vugar Gashimov, while future winner Andrey Volokitin disposed of his compatriot Ruslan Ponomariov in what was, according to him, his best match. This match you will find annotated in full at the end of this article.

DAVID LLADA

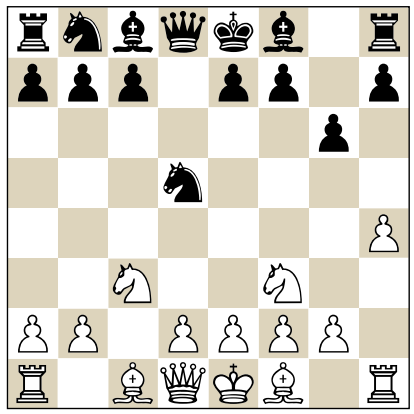
The quarter-final match between Bacrot and Moiseenko even went to the Armageddon games, also played on two boards simultaneously. A crazy but thrilling spectacle.

Alexander Moiseenko and Leinier Dominguez needed to go to the tiebreak to defeat Etienne Bacrot and Julio Granda respectively. In the case of the Moiseenko-Bacrot match, they even went to Armageddon games, also played on two boards simultaneously: four minutes for the black player, and six for White, who would have to win 1½-½. It was a crazy but thrilling spectacle, in which Bacrot fought like a lion but finally collapsed.

Obviously, dividing your attention between two boards can lead to blunders at crucial moments. My old friend Mig Greengard even congratulated us 'for inventing a new way to play chess worse'. But in general I got the impression that playing two games simultaneously also stimulated the players' creativity and fighting spirit. A good example is the following game between Naiditsch and Volokitin. Arkadij was far from showing his best level in this game, which allowed the tournament winner to create a little gem that all spectators enjoyed.

EO 52.6 – A15
Arkadij Naiditsch
Andrey Volokitin
San Sebastian 2012 (4)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5 5.h4!?



This is a new idea that Paco Vallejo has been putting into practice. It has given White some good results recently.

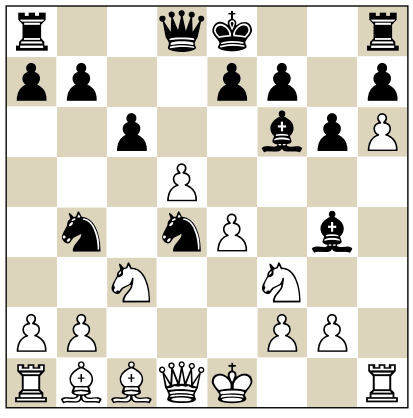
5...♗g7 6.h5 ♘c6 7.d4 ♗g4 8.h6 ♗f6 9.e4?!

Here comes the novelty, but it is probably not a good one. After seeing how easily Black can demolish the white position, we can conclude that 9.e3 is probably better.

9...♘db4 10.d5 ♘d4 11.♗d3 c6!

From here on, Black takes the initiative, and with his next move, sacrificing a piece, the attack becomes very dangerous.

12.♗b1



12...cxd5! 13.e5 ♗xe5 14.♕a4+ b5!

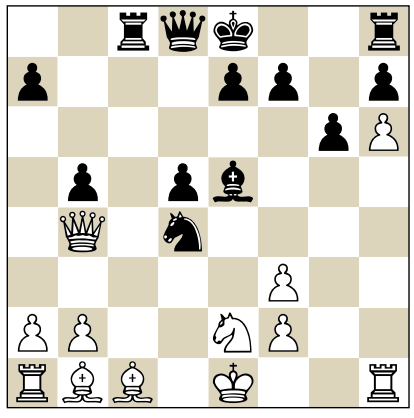
Obviously 14...♘bc6 would still be a fatal mistake, as it would run into 15.♘xe5.

15.♕xb4 ♗xf3 16.gxf3 ♖c8

Probably better was 16...a5 17.♕c5 ♖c8 18.♕a7 b4 19.♘e2, with the same idea of 19...♖c2!! 20.♔f1 ♖xe2 21.♗d3 ♖c2 22.♗xc2 ♘xc2 23.♖b1 0-0, and Black would have a clear advantage, but nothing conclusive yet.

17.♘e2?

Black would have clear compensation for the piece after 17.♕a3 ♖c4 18.♕xa7 ♕c8 19.♖f1 0-0, but White could still put up a fight.



17...♖c2!! Here comes the brilliancy.

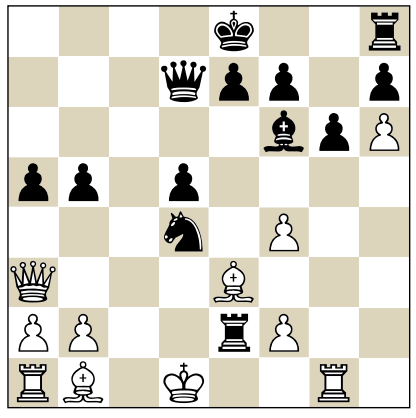
18.♔d1?

Possibly the decisive mistake; now all hope is lost. White could have tried 18.♖f1 instead, and after 18...a5 19.♕a3 ♖xe2+ 20.♕c5 the position is still unclear.

18...a5 19.♕a3 ♖xe2 20.f4 ♕d7! 21.♖g1

After 21.fxe5 ♕g4 the game is over, and things look pretty hopeless for White after 21.♕h3 ♗f6 22.♕xd7+ ♔xd7.

21...♗f6 22.♗e3



22...♖xb2! 23.♕xb2 ♘f3 24.♕b3 ♘xg1 25.♗d3 0-0 26.♖c1 ♕g4+ 27.♔c2 ♘e2 28.♖e1 ♖c8+ 29.♔b1 ♘c3+ 30.♔c2 a4

White resigned.

Sadly, the final match between Volokitin and Laznicka, two young players who had delighted us during the whole tournament with their tactical accuracy, had very little content. With

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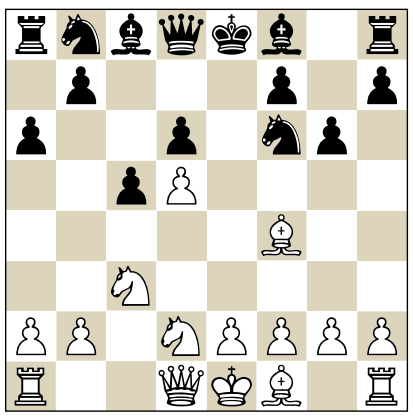
level positions on both boards that made all spectators expect another tie-break, Laznicka, exactly as Ivanchuk has done a couple of times, totally forgot about a gadget called the clock, and allowed his flag to fall in an extremely drawish position. Highly affected by this incomprehensible mistake, he also collapsed in the other game and resigned shortly afterwards. No doubt Volokitin was a deserved winner, but Laznicka certainly didn't deserve such a tragic end to what was, overall, a very nice performance from him. Before we move on to the best effort of the tournament winner, here's a sample of Laznicka's talent.

NOTES BY
Viktor Laznicka

BI 12.8 – A61
Viktor Laznicka
Vugar Gashimov
San Sebastian 2012 (5)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 e6 4.♘c3 exd5 5.cxd5 d6 6.♘f3 g6 7.♗f4 a6 8.♘d2



An interesting attempt to avoid the main lines. Levon Aronian introduced this move against the same Vugar two years ago.

8...♘bd7

A novelty. Black usually opts for 8...b5.

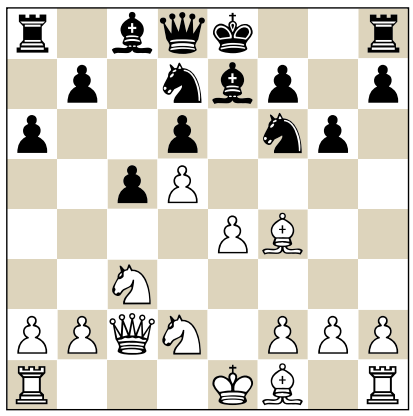
9.♕c2

An attempt to hamper Black's development. After 9.♘c4 Black's defensive idea was 9...♘b6, with equal chances. On 9.a4 Black replies 9...♘h5 and successfully pursues the white bishop.

9...♗e7

White would get a clear advantage after 9...♘h5 10.♕e4+ ♕e7 11.♗xd6, while 9...b5 10.a4 b4 11.♘ce4 would be dangerous for Black.

10.e4

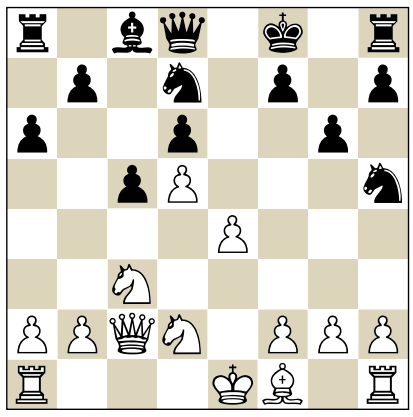


White has achieved his goal. The dark-squared bishop is slightly misplaced on e7.

10...♘h5 11.♗h6 ♗f8

The alternative 11...g5 12.h4 would be too risky, and 11...♗g5 12.♗xg5 ♕xg5 13.g3 0-0 14.a4 gives White an edge.

12.♗xf8 ♔xf8



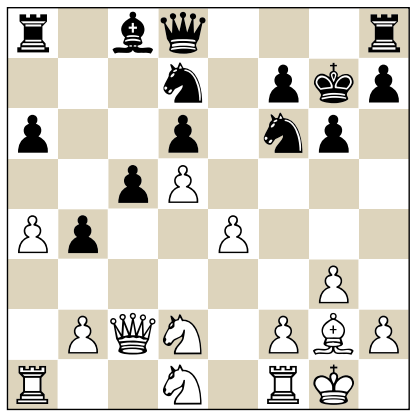
13.g3

White does not care about the ...b5 advance. His strategy is connected with seizing the initiative in the centre and on the kingside.

To 13.a4 Black replies 13...♔g7, but from a positional point of view, 13.♘c4 ♘b6 14.♘e3 ♔g7 15.g3, with a4 coming soon, was definitely a worthy alternative.

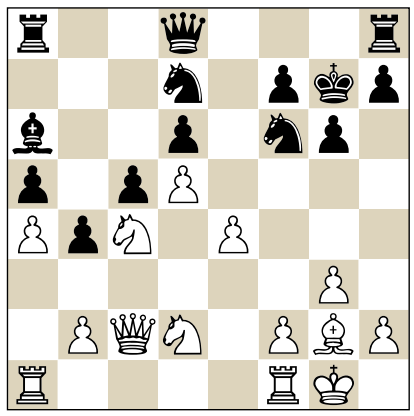
13...b5 14.♗g2 ♔g7 15.0-0 ♘hf6 16.a4 b4 White is slightly better after 16...♖b8 17.axb5 axb5 18.b4.

17.♘d1



A typical manoeuvre in this type of position. White transfers the knight in order to occupy the excellent c4-square.

17...a5 18.♘e3 ♗a6 19.♘ec4



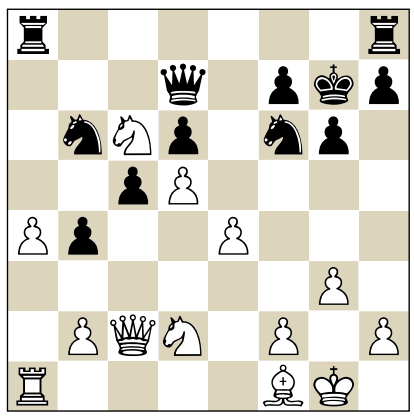
19...♘b6?!

An unnecessary move that gives White a splendid opportunity to sacrifice an exchange and to start dominating the entire board. Better was 19...♗xc4

20.♘xa5 ♗xf1 21.♘c6 ♕d7 22.♗xf1

White has to coordinate his pieces, after which he should be better. He has to restrict Black's counterplay.

Less clear is 22.♔xf1 ♘g4 23.a5 ♘xh2+ 24.♔g1 ♘g4.



DAVID LLADA

Viktor Laznicka ready for another round, torn between two boards.

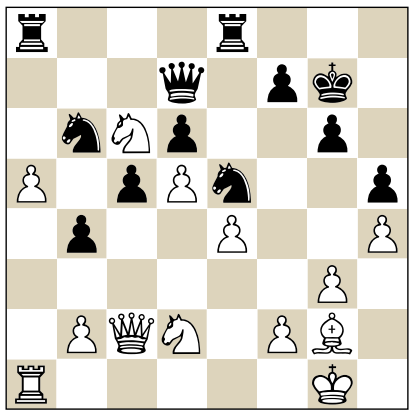
22...h5

22...♘fxd5 was tempting but not correct, as after 23.exd5 ♘xd5 24.♗g2 ♕xc6 25.♕b3 c4 26.♕xc4 ♕xc4 27.♘xc4 White has a large advantage.

23.h4 ♖he8 24.♗g2

White must be careful. The black rooks are lacking play at the moment and I want to keep it that way.

24...♘g4 25.a5 ♘e5



26.♖d1

26.♖e1 would have shown better foresight.

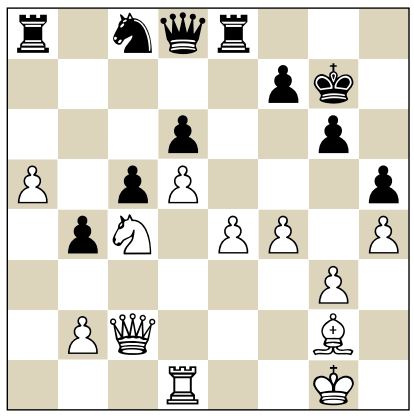
26...♘c8 27.♘xe5 ♖xe5

Capturing with the pawn, 27...dxe5, would have given Black better chances to save the day: 28.♖a1 ♕c7 29.a6 ♘d6 30.♘c4.

28.♘c4 ♖e8 29.f4 ♕d8

Black now threatens to get rid of White's trump, his passed a-pawn.

29...f6 would be weakening, but still deserved attention: 30.♔h2 ♕d8 31.♗h3 ♘a7 32.e5 ♘b5 33.♕a4, with a white initiative.



30.♕a4?!

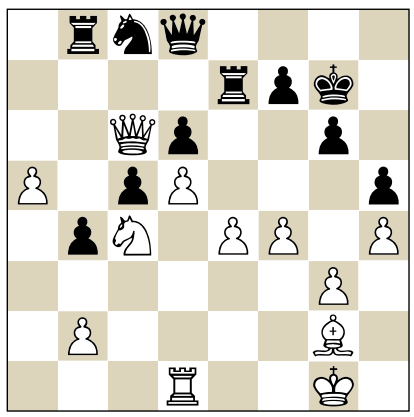
30.♗h3! was the right way to proceed: 30...♘a7 31.e5 ♘b5 32.♕a4, with some advantage to White.

30...♖b8 Black is threatening ...b3. 30...♘b6 won't work because of 31.♘xb6 ♕xb6 32.♕xe8, and Black can resign. But he could have tried 30...♖e7 31.♕b5 ♖ea7 32.e5, when White keeps some advantage.

31.♕c6

Quite an unconvincing effort to create disharmony in the black camp.

31...♖e7 White would be happy after 31...b3 32.e5 ♖b4 33.♗f1.

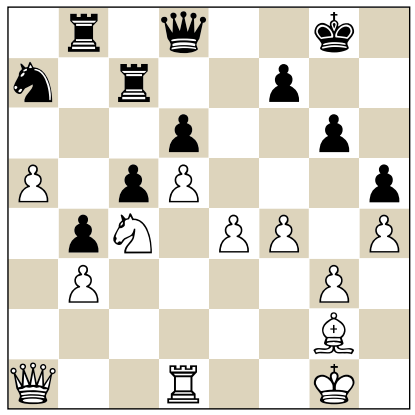


32.b3

It's time to consolidate again, although White would have good chances after 32.e5 ♖c7 33.♕a4 b3 34.♕a1 ♖b4 35.♕c1.

32...♖c7 33.♕a4 ♘a7 34.♕a1+ ♔g8

The alternative was 34...f6, the consequences of which are not easy to assess.



35.e5

As we will see later, the strange queen manoeuvre to the corner of the board secured White a couple of tempi to get a strong attack on the kingside.

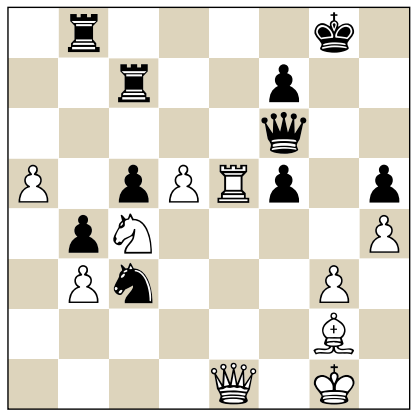
35...♘b5 36.f5 ♘c3

36...♘d4 37.♘xd6 clearly favours White.

37.♖e1

Black has managed to activate his knight, but at a cost. The white pawns are rolling ahead and the black king cannot feel comfortable either.

37...dxe5 38.♖xe5 ♕f6 39.♕e1 gxf5



40.d6

There is probably more than one way to win in such a position. White has many possibilities.

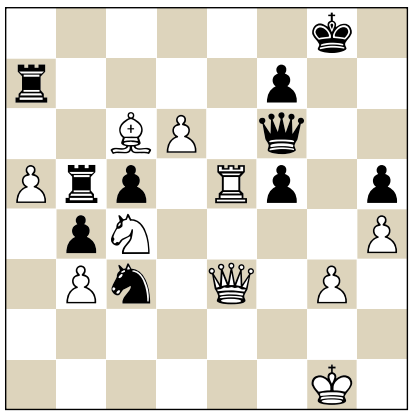
40...♖a7 41.♕e3

41.♕f2 would unnecessarily complicate matters because of 41...♖xa5.

41...♖b5

Otherwise White would grab all the black pawns.

42.♗c6



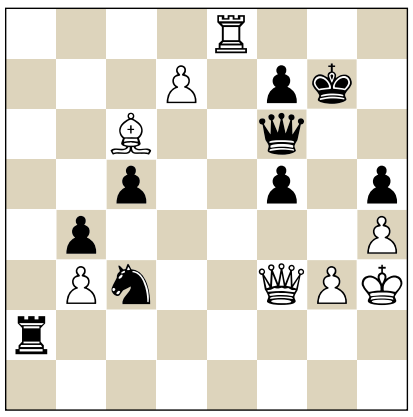
42...♖bxa5

Now everything is forced.

43.♘xa5 ♖xa5 44.d7 ♖a1+ 45.♔h2 ♖a2+ 46.♔h3 ♔h7

The bishop cannot be taken: 46...♕xc6 47.♕g5+ ♔h7 48.♕xf5+ ♔g7 49.♕g5+ ♔h7 50.♕xh5+ ♔g7 51.♖g5+, and wins.

47.♕f3 ♔g7 48.♖e8



The rest is easy. 48.♖xf5 would allow a last clever trick: 48...♘e2.

48...♕g6 49.♖g8+

Avoiding 49.d8♕ ♕g4+ 50.♕xg4+ fxg4 mate.

49...♔xg8 50.d8♕+ ♔g7 51.♕g5 ♘e2 52.♕fe3 ♕xg5 53.hxg5 ♖c2 54.♗f3

Another nice cooperative 'helpmate' that should be avoided was 54.♕e5+ ♔g8 55.♗g2 ♘g1+ 56.♔h4 ♘f3+ 57.♗xf3 ♖h2 mate.

54...♘d4 55.♕e5+

Black resigned.

NOTES BY
Andrey Volokitin

SI 1.4 – B51
Ruslan Ponomariov
Andrey Volokitin
San Sebastian 2012 (5)

In this special format only the first match felt unusual; after that everything went normally. My start was not easy, in the very first match I had to play the solid GM Bogdan Lalic. I think that for me this was beneficial – the more difficult the opponent, the more effort is needed, and hence I quickly got into my optimal form. For commentary I have chosen my quarter-final match with Ruslan Ponomariov, an outstanding player on the knock-out system.

1.e4 A surprise. In recent times Ruslan has more often been playing the closed games.

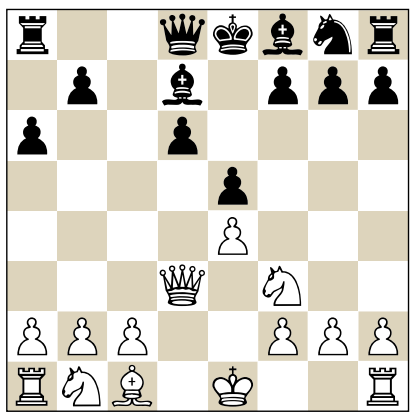
1...c5 2.♘f3 d6 I chose the Najdorf Variation, because in 2011 he had poor results against this variation, and I also wanted to obtain sharper positions against Ruslan.

3.♗b5+

In making this move Ruslan obviously had something in view, since usually he plays the main lines with 3.d4.

3...♘d7 I believe that White also has no advantage after 3...♗d7, but the move in the game leads to more complicated positions.

4.d4 cxd4 5.♕xd4 e5 6.♕d3 a6 7.♗xd7+ ♗xd7



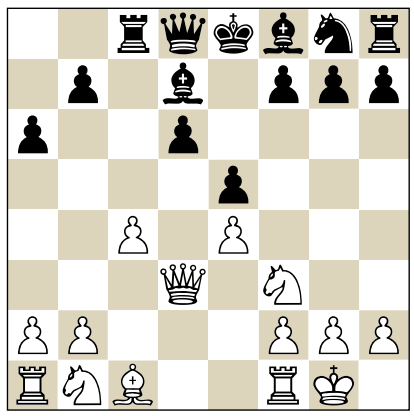
In this variation I have won two games against Spasov and Rozentalis. Black's idea is to exploit his light-square bishop, which no longer has a white opponent. White wants to control the centre and exploit the weakened d5-point.

8.c4 ♖c8

For the moment the two players make moves without thinking. Meanwhile, Black had an interesting possibility of immediately latching on to the c4 pawn: 8...b5 9.♘a3 ♕b6 10.0-0 ♕b7, when compared with the game Black has not played ...♖c8.

The move in the game is also not bad. Generally speaking, I assess the given position as promising for Black.

9.0-0

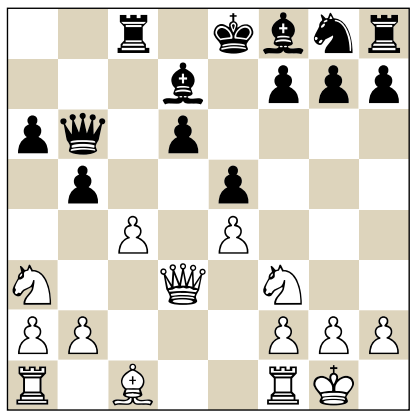


9...b5

I decided to undermine the central c4 pawn immediately, although it was also possible to first attack it: 9...♕c7 10.b3 b5 11.♘a3 ♕b7. The difference is that the move b3 has been provoked.

10.♘a3 ♕b6

If Black should succeed in developing his kingside, he will be excellently placed. White has a lead in development, which to exploit concretely is difficult, in fact impossible, to tell the truth.



San Sebastian 2011/12	
Final	
Laznicka-Volokitin	0-2
Semi-final	
Laznicka-Moiseenko	2½-1½
Dominguez-Volokitin	½-1½
Quarter Final	
Gashimov-Laznicka	½-1½
Granda Zuniga-Dominguez	1-3
Ponomariov-Volokitin	½-1½
Moiseenko-Bacrot	4½-3½
Round 4	
Gashimov-Landa	4-2
Mamedyarov-Granda Zuniga	0-2
Ponomariov-Feller	4-2
Moiseenko-Miton	1½-½
Bacrot-Maze	1½-½
Naiditsch-Volokitin	1-3
Dominguez-Fressinet	3-1
Vachier-Lagrave-Laznicka	1-3

11.♖d1 ♕b7 12.♗g5

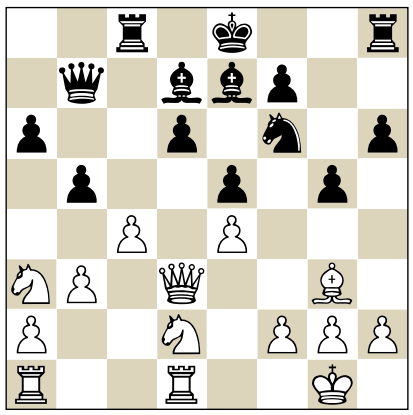
Ruslan prevents the development of the black knight and forces a weakening of the kingside. The play becomes sharper.

12...h6 13.♗h4 g5

Here I began thinking seriously.

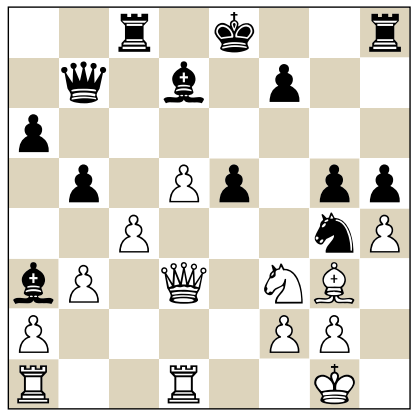
14.♗g3 ♘f6 15.♘d2 ♗e7 16.b3

With the obvious idea of bringing the knight at a3 into play via ♘c2-e3. Here one of the critical points in the game was reached. Black has many possibilities. Which move to chose? How best to play?



16...♘h5

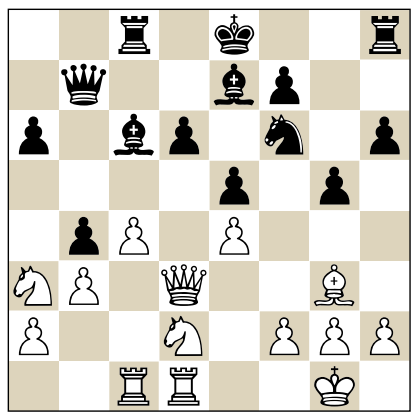
At this point I thought for the longest time in this game. First of all I calculated the move 16...h5 17.h4! (the only move) 17...♘g4 18.♘f3! (the only move), and here I saw that after 18...d5 19.exd5 ♗xa3 I would win the knight, but the position seemed dangerous to me, though I overestimated White's attacking resources. In fact the complications end in Black's favour, as is confirmed by the following variation:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

20.♗xe5 ♘xe5 21.♘xe5 0-0 22.hxg5 ♗b2 23.♘xd7 ♕xd7 24.♖ab1 ♗e5 25.♖e1 ♗b8, and Black's piece is worth more than White's three pawns. It can be concluded that the sharp and direct move 16...h5 leads to complications favourable for Black.

Let us now see what happens if Black plays more positionally: 16...♗c6!? 17.♖ac1!? (an attempt to muddy the waters. It is possible simply to defend the e4 pawn with 17.♖e1?! h5 18.h4 ♘d7!, but then Black has the advantage. Or 17.f3 g4. This is the idea of the move 16...♗c6 – Black advantageously opens the g-file for counterplay, although White is solidly placed after 18.♘c2) 17...b4



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

18.c5! (a sudden counter-attack with a piece sacrifice) 18...bxa3 19.cxd6 ♗d8 20.♗xe5 0-0 21.♕h3 h5. I think that here the compensation for the piece is insufficient. I did not see the move 16...♗c6 during the game – it was suggested to me by the computer, but it promises Black less than 16...h5.

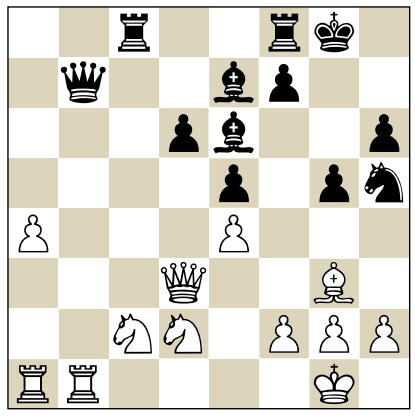
There is another move, which did not even occur to me during the game – the mysterious rook move 16...♖g8, with the idea of playing ...h6-h5, after first preparing this move. In many variations the rook is well placed on g8, for example: 17.♘c2 h5 18.h4 ♘h7! – very strong, after which the black pieces coordinate well with one another.

Of the three continuations examined, two – 16...h5 and 16...♖g8 – were stronger than the move made in the game and promised better chances. 16...♘h5 maintains the balance in the position, but not more.

17.cxb5

My idea was to go in for 17.♘c2 ♘f4! and then after 18.♗xf4 gxf4 19.cxb5 to capture with the bishop on b5: 19...♗xb5 20.♘c4 ♗xc4 21.bxc4 ♕c6, obtaining a comfortable game. Ruslan forces me to take on b5 with the pawn.

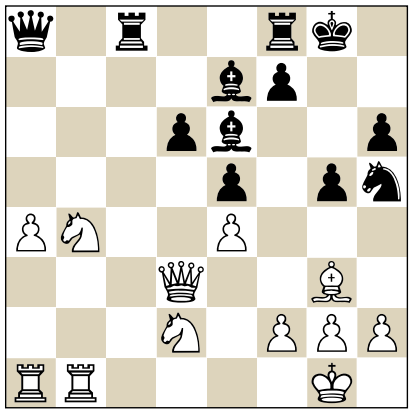
17...axb5 18.♘c2 ♗e6 19.a4 bxa4 20.bxa4 0-0 21.♖db1



Here for the first time Ruslan had a serious think and he made a rook move which was contrary to his initial intention of placing his knight on e3.

21...♕a8 22.♘b4

I think it is more in the spirit of the position to place the knight on e3, although Ruslan's idea now consists in quickly advancing his a-pawn.



22...♖c5 A safe move, preventing a4-a5, but allowing White to make a draw by repetition.

The position could have been sharpened by 22...f5 23.exf5 ♗xf5. Although after the queen exchange 24.♕d5+ ♕xd5 25.♘xd5 ♗d8 26.♖d1 with correct play by both sides the game should end in a draw, there would still have been much play in prospect.

23.♘a6!

If White does not play this, there is the prospect of him losing the pawn on a4.

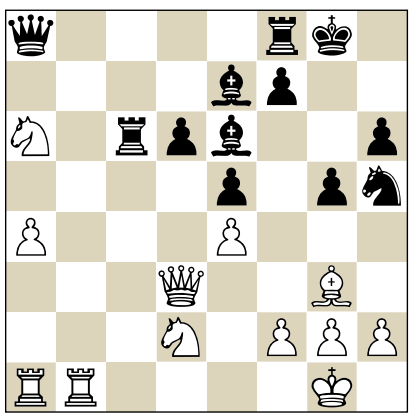
23...♖c6

Also played without hesitation.

24.♘b4 The only move. **24...♖c5 25.♘a6**

Ruslan's decision to make a draw in accordance with the position was absolutely correct, but it should also be borne in mind that two games were being played and in both he had an advantage in time, so possibly it made sense to take a risk contrary to the position and play on. Who knows?

25...♖c6 26.♘b4 ♖c5 27.♘a6 ♖c6



At this point I had a very promising position with white before playing f4-f5, and so without hesitation I made a draw in this game.

NOTES BY

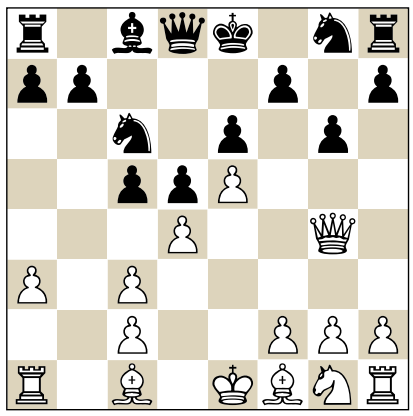
Andrey Volokitin

FR 11.1 – C18
Andrey Volokitin
Ruslan Ponomariov
San Sebastian 2012 (5)

1.e4 e6

The second surprise for me in this match. In our last two games Ruslan had preferred the Caro-Kann Defence, both games ended in draws, and naturally this was the opening I was expecting most.

2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e5 c5 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.bxc3 ♘c6 7.♕g4 g6

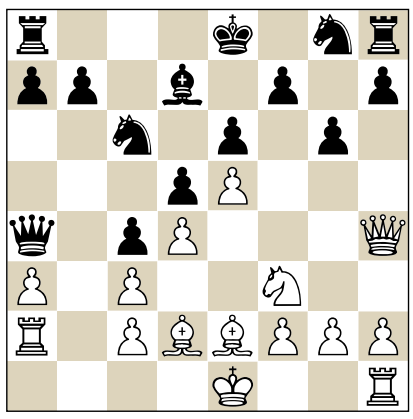


Ruslan had played this variation earlier, but quite rarely, and to be honest I considered this variation to be dubious for Black.

8.♘f3 ♕a5 9.♗d2 ♕a4 10.♗e2 c4

I slightly prepared this variation before the game. In particular I looked at 10...♕xc2 11.dxc5! ♕e4 12.♕xe4 dxe4 13.♘g5, when White stands better.

11.♖a2 ♗d7 12.♕h4

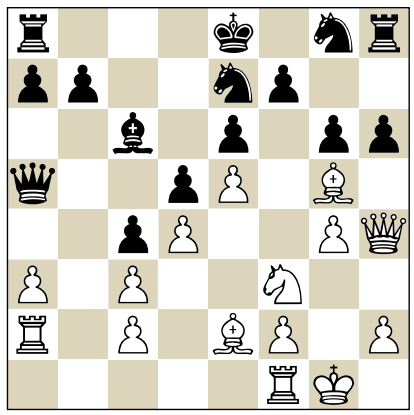


The idea of this move is clear – to prevent queenside castling.

12...h6 13.0-0 ♘ce7 14.♗g5

Continuing the same strategy: I want, if possible, to place my bishop on f6, in order then to capture on f6 with the pawn and place my knight on e5.

14...♗c6 15.g4 ♕a5



I have to admit that the computer and I overestimated this position for White. The position is closed and it is not easy for White to breach it. Black has the better pawn structure and White's light-square bishop is running up against the black c4 pawn, so that Black has his pluses. White needs to exploit his dark-square bishop and the weakened dark squares on Black's kingside.

16.♖b1 ♘c8

Up to this point I had made my moves quite quickly, but here I thought for a long time, spending more than 30 minutes on my next move. I was calculating and assessing the transformation of the position after the following more or less forced moves.

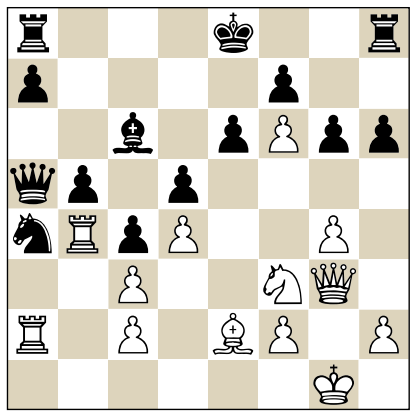
17.a4 ♘b6

This move came into Black's plans.

18.♖b4

Played instantly.

18...♘xa4 19.♗f6 ♘xf6 20.exf6 b5 21.♕g3



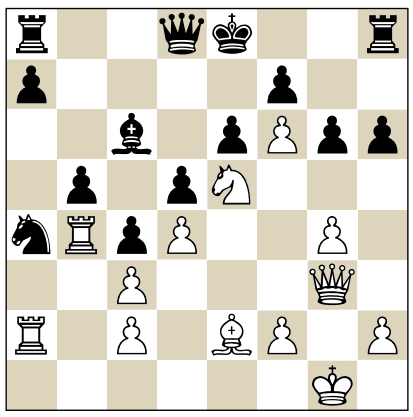
It was this transformation that I had in mind when I played 17.a4. White has given up his dark-squared bishop, but in return he has gained the excellent e5-square for his knight.

21...♕d8

Bad was 21...♘xc3?? 22.♕d6 ♕d8 23.♕xc6+ ♔f8 24.♖a3 ♖c8 25.♕a6 ♘xe2+ 26.♔f1 ♘f4 27.♖xb5 ♔g8 28.♖b7 ♕xf6 29.♘e5 ♖h7 30.♖xa7 with an overwhelming advantage for White.

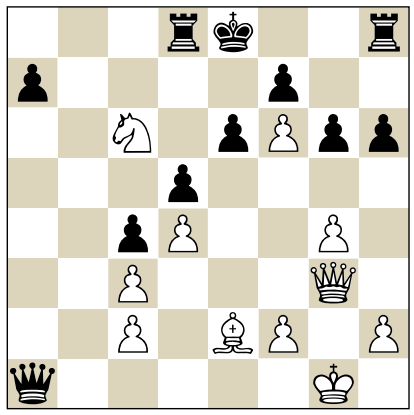
22.♘e5

As a result Black has won a pawn and supported his knight on a4 with ...b5. White tries to break through on both wings, either by sacrificing the exchange on the queenside and invading with his rook on the b-file, or by advancing f4-f5.



22...♕d6 Here Black has two other moves, which with correct play by both sides lead to a draw:

A) 22...♗d7. This I considered to be the strongest, since the f6 pawn remains under attack. During the game I examined 23.♖axa4, an interesting exchange sacrifice, but it leads only to a draw: 23...bxa4 24.♖b7. White's rook and knight are very active, but Black is saved by his passed a-pawn: 24...a3 25.♖xd7 (25.♘xf7?? fails to 25...a2 26.♘xd8 a1♕+ 27.♔g2 ♖xd8 28.♕d6 ♖h7!, and Black wins) 25...a2 26.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 27.♘c6 a1♕+.

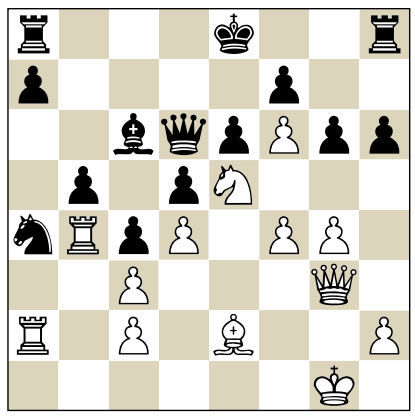


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A picturesque position is reached, where Black is two exchanges to the good, but the white pieces are very active, and the result is a draw: 28.♔g2 ♕e1 29.♘xd8 ♕xe2 30.♕d6 ♕xg4+ 31.♔f1 ♕d1+ 32.♔g2 ♕g4+ with perpetual check;

B) 22...♕c7. This move allows White many possibilities. One of these is the exchange sacrifice on a4, followed by a piece sacrifice on c4 and the win of the bishop on c6, based on the X-ray of rook and queen.

23.f4



23...♘b6

At this point I made a draw with the black pieces and I could calmly concentrate on this game, where my position appealed to me.

Instead of 23...♘b6 the computer suggests the aggressive move 23...g5, which I did not consider during the game. Now 24.♕h3 gxf4 25.g5 leads to a very complicated position, which is difficult to play for both sides. For example, 25...♖h7 26.♖a1 0-0-0 27.♗d3 cxd3 28.♕xd3 ♖dh8 29.♖bxa4 bxa4 30.♕a6+ ♔c7 31.♕xa7+ ♔c8 32.♕a6+. This example ending in perpetual check is not obligatory, but

DAVID LLADA

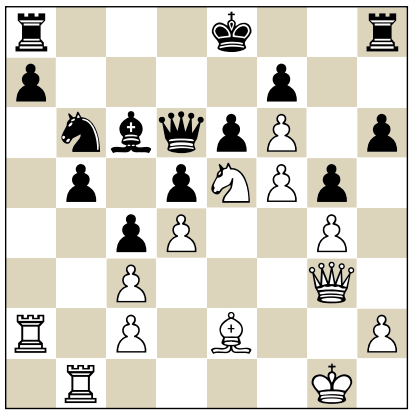
A fully concentrated Andrey Volokitin contemplates his next move.

it shows the interesting possibilities available to both sides.

24.f5! g5

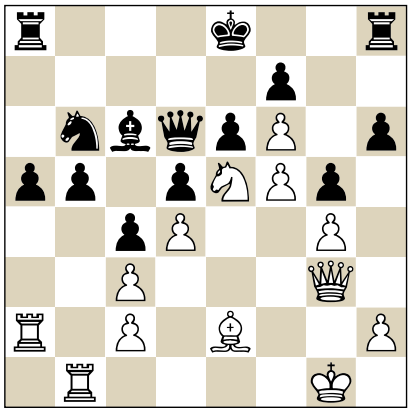
The only move. It was bad to capture the pawn: 24...gxf5? 25.gxf5 exf5 26.♗h5 (the bishop makes a victorious entry into the game) 26...♕xf6 27.♘xf7 ♔d7 28.♘xh8 ♕xh8 29.♖b1 and White is better, or 24...exf5? 25.gxf5 ♕xf6 26.fxg6 fxg6 27.♖b1 and the black king has nowhere to run. After 27...0-0 28.♘xg6 White is better.

25.♖b1



25...♗d7?

A serious mistake. Under pressure, Ruslan fails to find the best solution. The cool-headed advance of the a-pawn was correct – 25...a5! and, strangely enough, White has no more than equality:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 26.fxe6 ♕xe6 27.♖ab2 0-0 (Black castles at just the right time!) 28.h4 ♕xf6 29.hxg5 hxg5 30.♘xc6 ♕xc6 31.♖xb5 ♖a6 and again it is equal;

B) 26.♖ab2? (playing this way, White ends up in a worse position) 26...♘d7! 27.♘xc6 (27.fxe6? ♘xe5!) 27...♕xc6 28.♖xb5 a4! 29.♖b7 ♔d8!. The a-pawn advances, and Black is better;

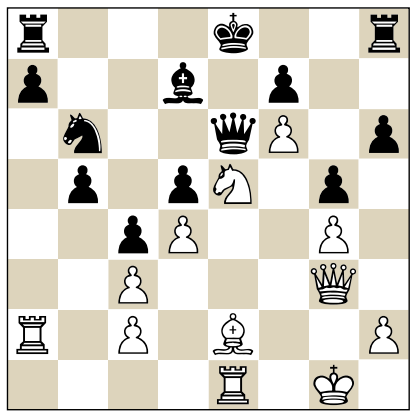
C) 26.♖e1? (also a poor move) 26...♘d7! 27.fxe6 ♘xe5 with advantage to Black.

26.fxe6! Accurately played!

26...♕xe6

It was stronger to capture on e6 with the bishop, although it is quite natural that Ruslan should not want to give up the b5 pawn. 26...♗xe6! 27.♖xb5 ♘d7 28.♘xd7 ♕xg3+ 29.hxg3 ♔xd7 30.♗f3 a6 31.♗xd5! axb5 32.♗xa8 ♗xg4 33.♖a6 leads to a better endgame for White.

27.♖e1!



Here I was happy with my position. White has many threats and an easy game.

27...♔d8 Castling kingside would mean subjecting the king to a mating attack: 27...0-0 28.♖f1 ♔h7 29.♖f3.

28.♗f3!

A natural move. The bishop comes into play and opens up an X-ray of the rook on the queen.

28...♕xf6

I also calculated 28...♖e8 29.♖ea1 ♘a4 30.♕g2, when White stands better.

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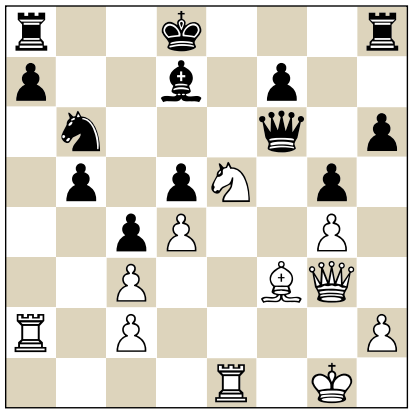


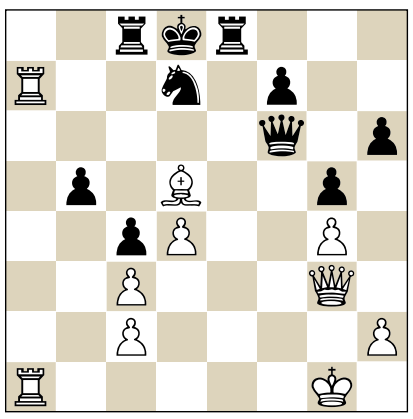
29.♖ea1

I made this natural move, but here there was a win, as the computer showed after the game: 29.♖a6!! ♗e6 30.♘c6+ ♔d7 31.♖f1!! (moves like this are very difficult to find) 31...♕f4 (31...♕g7 32.♘xa7) 32.♘e5+ ♔c7 33.♕e1! and the black queen is trapped.

29...♖e8 30.♘xd7!

A timely exchange of pieces is an important part of the conversion process, although in the given instance White simply wins the pawn on d5.

30...♘xd7 31.♗xd5 ♖c8 32.♖xa7



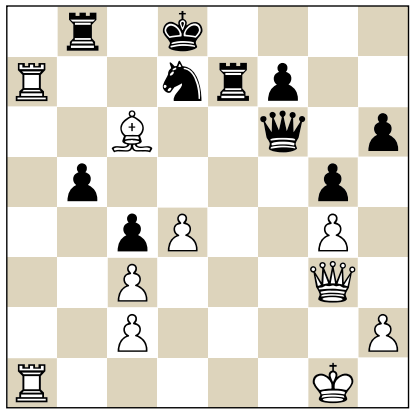
White's position is absolutely won. The only problem was that I only had about 2 minutes left on my clock, and I still had to win this won position.

32...♖e7 33.♗b7

An inaccuracy. It was stronger to play for domination: 33.♖7a6! ♕f4 34.♕xf4 gxf4 35.♖xh6 with an easy win.

33...♖b8 34.♗c6??

A blunder due to shortage of time. There was an easy win by 34.♖1a6 ♕f4 35.♕xf4 gxf4 36.♖xh6.



34...♕f4??

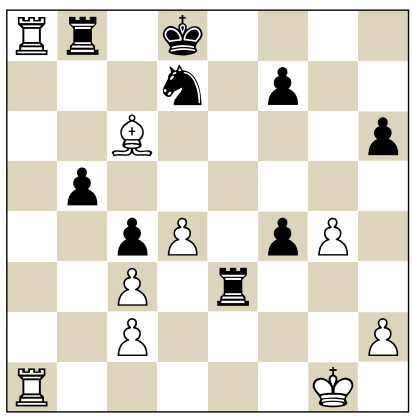
Throughout the game (and the entire match) Ruslan played quickly. Here, with 15 minutes on his clock, he should have thought and found a simple solution: 34...♕xc6! 35.♖xd7+ ♕xd7 36.♕xb8+ ♕c8. I completely forgot that my g4 pawn was hanging with check, and Black has very good drawing chances.

35.♕xf4 gxf4 36.♖a8

36.♔f2! was far more methodical.

36...♖e3

After the capture 36...♖xa8 37.♖xa8+ ♔c7 38.♗xd7 ♔b7! (I did not see this interposition) 39.♖a5 ♖xd7 40.♖xb5+ ♔c6 41.♖c5+ ♔d6 42.♖xc4 all the same White should win.



37.d5! ♔e7 38.♖xb8

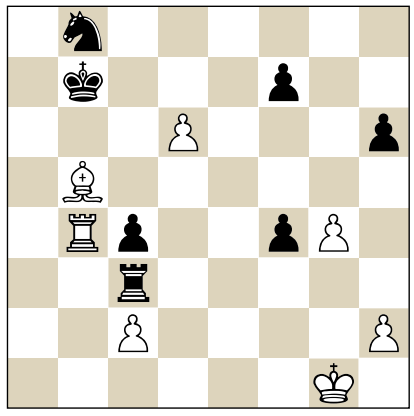
There was also an easy win by 38.♖8a7 ♖d8 39.♗xb5 ♖xc3 40.♖b7, but the move in the game is not bad.

38...♘xb8 39.♗xb5 ♔d6

After the capture of the pawn 39...♖xc3 40.♖a8 ♖xc2 41.♖xb8 White should be able to convert his extra bishop: 41...♔d6 42.♖d8+ ♔c7 43.♖f8 c3 44.♖xf7+ ♔d6 45.♖d7+ ♔e5 46.♖c7 ♔xd5 47.♗a4 and White wins.

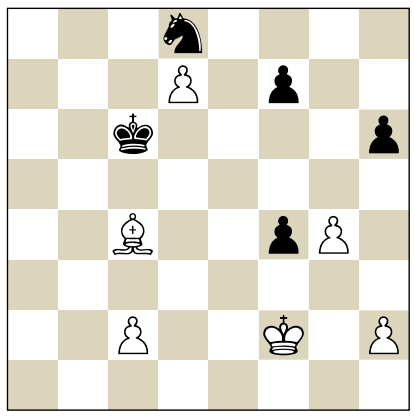
40.♖a8 ♔c7 41.d6+ ♔b7 42.♖a4 ♖xc3 43.♖b4

Another possibility was to win the bishop: 43.d7 ♘xd7 44.♗xd7 ♖xc2 45.♗b5 c3 46.♗d3 ♖d2 47.♗e4+ ♔b6 48.♖c4 ♖d1+ 49.♔f2 ♖d2+ 50.♔e1 ♖xh2 51.♖xc3 and wins.



43...♘c6 The only way to test White's technique was by 43...♔c8 44.♖xc4+ ♖xc4 45.♗xc4 ♘c6 46.♗b5! ♘d4 47.c4 f5 48.gxf5 ♘xf5 49.c5 ♘d4 50.♗a4 and the connected passed pawns decide the outcome.

44.d7 ♘d8 45.♖xc4 ♖xc4 46.♗xc4 ♔c6 47.♔f2



47...♔d6

The remaining moves are very easy for White, but Ruslan always fights to the last chance. If 47...♔xd7 48.♗d5! (a methodical move, exploiting the fact that the pawn endgame is won for White) 48...♘e6 (48...♔e7 49.♔f3 ♔d6 50.c4 ♔e5 51.h4 f6 52.♔e2 and White wins by zugzwang) 49.♗xe6+ and wins.

48.♔f3 ♔e5 49.h4 f6 50.c3 ♘c6 51.♗b5 ♘d8 52.c4 ♘e6 53.c5 ♘d4+ 54.♔f2 ♘e6 55.c6 ♔d6 56.♗c4 ♘d8 57.♗d5!

Black resigned. ■

Short Stories

Don't Fear the Reaper

Recently I had a dream in which I was playing against the English Grandmaster Nick Pert. My position was at first very comfortable and everything seemed fine. Suddenly we were both plunged into zeitnot and a few pieces were knocked off the board. We continued until the time-control was reached and then Nick quietly picked up the fallen chessmen and placed them back on the table. I saw now that I was completely lost. 'Are you sure they were there?' I asked him. 'Yes', he answered. It took a moment or two for the adverse turn of events to sink in, but I understood he was right.

Despite the imagery, I believe the dream has little, if anything, to do with chess. It didn't take long to realize that Nick Pert symbolized my teenage son Nicholas, and that the sequence represented the oedipal struggle in which I was defeated. I should stress that I am no devout, doctrinaire Freudian in the risible manner of Reuben Fine, but a number of the Austrian psychoanalyst's insights do appear to make sense.

Other dreams, however, require no deciphering or interpretation. In the run-up to the blitz match in Leuven last year I suffered nightmares about being humiliated by Kasparov. Dozens of defeats over decades at his hands obviously induced this. I would wake up in a sweat and my acute anxiety did not leave until the event itself (where naturally I remained tense, but that is only normal and indeed beneficial for concentration). During Game 2, I sensed that Garry was very nervous and ripe for the taking. In previous years I might have tried to convince myself intellectually of his weakness, but honestly I never really believed it deep down inside. In contrast, the match in Leuven was the first time in my life I genuinely felt his vulnerability. Of course that didn't stop me from metaphorically putting the ball over the crossbar, but at least the score was close. I doubt I will get another opportunity again because I don't foresee him risking his reputation in this way in future.

Apparently I am not the only one to suffer from chess nightmares. I featured, this time as tormentor, in a dream of Stuart Conquest's last year. According to Stuart his actual play against me in the British Championship was rather better than his unconscious suggested. Nevertheless the diurnal result was no different than the nocturnal, and I duly won.

As in other sports, fear is a deeply inhibiting factor in chess performance. No profound pessimist has ever risen to the top – although arguably Tigran Petrosian came reasonably close with his heightened, if not to say, at times, excessive sense of danger. It therefore follows logically that a degree of optimism is, on balance, beneficial. Normally one would think that the ability to accurately evaluate positions would be an asset – and in general I believe this to be the case – but a few players have had remarkably successful careers with severely impaired assessment functions. Joel Lautier is one name that springs to mind. In his early days in particular, he seemed to imagine he was destined to become World Champion. Talented as he undoubtedly was, his vaulting ambition, bluntly-speaking, was never likely to be attained. An important element or two were missing in his armoury. Nevertheless Joel finished his distinguished career with the enviable record of 5½-4½ against the greatest player of all – the Kasparov. In part this was due to the Frenchman's excellent opening preparation, but in no small part due to his relative lack of fear – something which Garry feeds on with almost animal instinct.

Viorel Bologan is another grandmaster whose optimism is (in)famous. Show him a position and he stands better. Turn the board round and he still stands better. I exaggerate, of course, but probably not as much as you think. When he is in good form and calculating well he is like an unstoppable tsunami. He pushes forward seizing every chance or half-chance available. When he is not quite at peak, he stumbles and trips. Indeed he sometimes loses games which his more conservative colleagues never would. On balance though, it makes him a more attractive player. Better to have a string of tournament victories – like Dortmund and Aeroflot – mixed

with the odd disaster, than to play like an anonymous bookkeeper. No one remembers who finished fourth.

Fear is not a constant. It tends to permeate a player's character as he ages. After losing a few games to Kramnik in the 1990s, Kasparov more or less abandoned his beloved King's Indian with which he had enjoyed tremendous success over the years. The opening had been by no means refuted and it certainly suited his attacking style, but the tension on which he had thrived in his youth had suddenly become unbearable. It was as if he no longer trusted himself to respond appropriately in the razor-sharp middlegames, where fantasy and courage were required in equal measure. Instead Garry drifted towards the Grünfeld, which depends heavily on preparation, memory and precise, mathematical calculation. To this particular aficionado, it was an aesthetic disappointment, but beauty, as we know, is often sacrificed on the altar of professionalism...

A fear of a different sort apparently struck Kasparov during his World Championship defeat in London, 2000. Two points down and with the end of the match in sight, the rational response of a man trying to save himself would be to make maximum use of his remaining whites. Instead Garry perplexed his supporters by agreeing a couple of absurdly short draws – effectively conceding defeat. As we have never heard a proper explanation for this, I shall offer my own interpretation. If a man goes flat-out, straining every sinew in his body, and still loses, he has nowhere to hide from the pain of failure. If he doesn't put everything into the struggle, he can delude himself with 'if only...' thoughts, and thus preserve part of his self-image. Of course, this is hugely self-destructive behaviour, but it provides a modicum of inner solace.

These days I am only truly psychologically troubled when facing very strong opposition. At 46 and with my powers slowly waning, it is difficult playing the 2800 Club even at the best of times. Thankfully it doesn't happen that much. The disparity in strength is already so large to make competing successfully distinctly arduous. When one compounds that purely technical gulf with inner daemons, a tough situation becomes even worse. These anxieties produce in me a chronic paralysis of action. Perversely, I am far more likely to prepare well for a modest event, with a smattering of GMs and plenty of patzers, than for a high-category round-robin. Whereas a young enthusiast would relish the opportunity to clash swords with the world elite, for me it is the exact opposite. I become an ostrich. Practically speaking, it doesn't help in the least, of course, but it provides mental comfort for a while.

'I should stress that I have not the slightest intention of abandoning competition – as four first, or equal-first finishes in 2011 ought to indicate'

The London Chess Classic is a superbly organised event which I have been very honoured to attend during its brief three-year existence. In the first two tournaments I was extremely consistent: I failed to win a game and finished in last place, despite being by no means the lowest-rated player. For the third edition, last December, I therefore set myself the modest goal of avoiding this grim fate. I narrowly attained my objective, thanks primarily to a nice victory over the British Champion, Michael Adams. Nevertheless, I cannot look back upon this latest result with any real satisfaction. The dispassionate, arid calculation of Professor Elo shows that I dropped 9 points, no less. Mere survival – albeit in a harsh competitive environment – is insufficient cause for celebration: one actually needs to thrive instead. At the end of the tournament I proposed to the director, Malcolm Pein, that perhaps he could invite me back in another capacity next year. He responded warmly to my suggestion. Should I step into the commentary box, as anticipated, in December 2012, some will doubtless interpret this as a giant step towards retirement. I should stress that I have not the slightest intention of abandoning competition – as four first, or equal-first finishes in 2011 ought to indicate. I am very keen to win many more tournaments, in all continents, if possible, before I end my career. Furthermore I can't afford to stop: chess is not so professionally run for there to be enough well-remunerated commentary jobs. The hunger and certainly the joy of playing remain, but I am now shifting my priorities to slightly less grueling events. When Jan Timman got pulverised in the Wijk aan Zee A Group for the nth time a few years ago, I, rather cruelly, described him in the newspaper as a 'flabby boxer'. I will be glad to see him do well in this year's B Group where, of course, he is much more likely to thrive. Eventually life teaches all of us our limitations. ■

Tigran Petrosian

The caretaker's son

Of all the World Champions, Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian is perhaps the most underrated. Genna Sosonko remembers and portrays the legendary Armenian, a complex character with a fabulous talent for the game. 'His paradoxical ideas, his smooth, all-encompassing style could never be confused with anyone else's, and we can still learn today from his brilliant games.'

Genna Sosonko

He bought the old dacha in Razdory from some deputy minister. Another one in better shape was being sold nearby, but Tigran resisted: 'It's a small piece of land, we won't be able to treat our guests right.' They fixed up the house, expanded it and built a veranda. He enjoyed showing the property to his friends and took care of every little detail. Once on a trip to Paris he declined a visit to the Louvre saying 'The hardware shop is my Louvre. I need paint for my dacha!'

He loved being in the country, he knew the plants and animals and constantly talked about his dogs and cats, adoring kittens. He cultivated roses, nurturing them. On Saturdays and Sundays no fewer than a dozen guests gathered at his dacha, which is to say – the property was luxurious. A fire was tended, kebabs were cooked; the host loved barbecued meat.

He was emotional, very lively, sociable, always telling jokes and stories. He threw himself into things as he aged, whether it was collecting records or stamps, or photography. He was happy when photos with his by-line appeared in the newspapers, and especially proud if the shots didn't have anything to do with chess. He showed everyone copies of *Sovietsky Sport* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda*

Tigran Petrosian loved being in the country. (Below) Petrosian at the 1953 Candidates' tournament in Zurich.

with text in tiny letters: 'Photograph Tigran Petrosian'.

At the Olympiad in Buenos Aires in 1978 the team from the Soviet Union was up against Holland in the last round. When I took my place at the board I saw a smiling Petrosian behind the barrier, happily clicking away on his camera, aiming it first at Lev Polugaevsky, who had replaced Petrosian himself in that match, then at me. Then a video camera appeared – a rarity in those days – and with no less enthusiasm he got into film-making.

He only acquired a taste for philately when he was older. He collected

two themes: chess and art. A risk-taker, he was fanatical about games. Billiards, ping-pong. Cards. His wife Rona was also a cards enthusiast and, according to their son Misha, she played better than his father: 'He got very upset, so she sometimes even gave up. They played idiot and tierce. When they had visitors, they played preference. It could get big.' But backgammon was in first place. 'Tigran was crazy about backgammon. He often excoriated me for some dumb move, from his point of view. At those moments the man from the Caucasus really came out in him', Rona Yakovlevna recalled.

Tigran Petrosian

He loved the world of sport, and knew it very well. His oldest son Misha went to ice hockey games with him in the early sixties, when they were still played outside: 'For one such match – it was minus 25, mother had given us a flask of brandy so that we didn't freeze. Another time he came from Amsterdam from the IBM tournament and went straight to the football without going home. And how could he miss it – it was Spartak-CSKA! Spartak won 3-0. You had to see my father, how happy he was.'

Although he wasn't indifferent to Yerevan's Ararat, Moscow's Spartak football and hockey teams were everything to him. He knew all the players personally, not only the ones on the main teams, but also the reserves. He sometimes went to match preparations, when he even put in a word. Spartak founder Nikolai Starostin doted on him. During matches, if he was playing chess himself, after making a move he would dash to the boys on the demonstration boards – what's the score?

He was a wonderful storyteller, he noticed the details that escaped other people's attention. The realities of Soviet life were often a presence in his jokes. 'Look here', he commented on a move after which the snoozing pieces started showing signs of life, 'this isn't the October Revolution yet, of course, but it's already the February one.'

Seeing me reading a newspaper at breakfast in a hotel, he asked: 'What are they giving us?' That was one of his favourite expressions, which he had also borrowed from the Soviet lexicon. He asked the same question at the Olympiad in Nice in 1974, when I brought the voracious reader Tal a Russian émigré newspaper: what are they giving us? But on seeing the name Sakharov in the headline of an editorial the expression on his face turned stony and he quickly went away.

A few months later at the IBM tournament in Amsterdam, he was playing in the main group and I was in the second group. The Dutch Herzen Foundation published books that were banned in the Soviet Union and one day I offered one of them to Petrosian. The book was about the situation in Armenia, current events, desperate individuals who were trying to fight for the republic's independence. Petrosian glanced at the title in horror and after dismissing it with 'No, no, I'm not interested in that at all', he hurried out of the room.

'Before my match with Botvinnik, for physical conditioning I got on skis and went all over the area around the holiday home on them.'

During analysis he came out with expressions that were apparently popular back then: 'a dangerous corner next to the Dynamo goal' and 'the train has left'. He feigned amazement: 'That move!?!' Or, giving his evaluation of some dull position: 'it isn't evening yet, but it's evening up.' 'And then?' I asked him when we were analysing some endgame position where White's advantage was completely insignificant. 'And then you go see Andersson', Petrosian advised me. 'Ulf will explain everything to you.' A fine compliment for the Swede's precise exploitation of barely noticeable advantages.

He was inclined towards colourful Eastern expressions. After returning from Manila in 1975 he made an appearance with Evgeny Vasiukov at the Central Chess Club on Gogolevsky Boulevard. Vasiukov's win against Lajos Portisch in the Volga Gambit had determined the winner of the tournament. 'Tigran Vartanovich has seen this game more than once already', Vasiukov started to decline when the fans who had gathered for the meeting asked him to show them the decisive duel. 'It's OK, it's OK', Petrosian replied, 'good food can be eaten twice.'

Sometimes he drawled with a gnashing of teeth: 'Soooo looooovely!' He explained once: 'I was playing Botvinnik in the Moscow Team Championship. I was world champion at the time, but Botvinnik... We were playing the Meran, I played b3, Botvinnik gave check with his bishop on b4, I retreated to e7, he advanced c5 and easily equalized. After the game, like a schoolboy, I chirped, "look, Mikhail Moiseevich, if I'd castled first instead of going b3 in the opening, you wouldn't have played c5 so easily." Botvinnik listened carefully and, when my burbling dried up, came out with, "This me-eans that you would have castled first? And only then fianchettoed your bishop? Soooo looooovely..." '

Once he was analysing a game in which he had to constantly try and maintain equality. 'I did have some pressure', his opponent insisted. 'What does that mean – pressure?' Petrosian stretched his lips into a tube shape. 'I don't understand that. If I go to the toilet and the flow is weak, it's clear

Assessing a portrait that was presented to him

Indifferent to alcohol, Petrosian looks in no hurry to empty the glass in front of him

that there's no pressure, but here? How does this pressure express itself? Show me your pressure!'

At Tilburg, noticing my glance at the significant dimensions of his stomach, he sighed, 'There's nothing to be done. A bundle of nerves...' 'Is that genetic, Tigran Vartanovich? Did your father have the same build?' I inquired of him timidly. 'My father, G., was a caretaker, an unskilled labourer. Have you ever seen a labourer with a stomach?'

In the Soviet Union most products were manufactured for internal use and others were issued in the so-called export version. The makes of car, for example, differed significantly from each other. The Petrosian whom I met in Tilburg, Nice or Buenos Aires was the export-brand Petrosian. A completely different one dropped into the editorial office of *64*, attended meetings of the national chess federation or called the Sport Committee. But even that export-brand Petrosian could be very variable. One chatted with me tolerantly or just smiled sceptically (just in case) in the company of Soviet grandmasters, another was severe, harsh, hardly bestowing any attention on me, if he didn't completely ignore me – in the presence of bureaucrats – and the third came out when we were left by ourselves.

He asked me sympathetically, 'How's life, G., is everything OK?' Always encouraged by a good word, I started telling him something excitedly, he was interested in the details and asked me about it; from the outside it might have seemed that almost bosom buddies were chatting. But even like that, sincere and open, albeit with quite a few provisos, he never forgot that he was talking with an émigré and the topic of conversation might become known to someone else. When I was with Petrosian I felt this much more sharply than I did in conversation with any other colleague from the Soviet Union.

He started going abroad in his youth. Not just anywhere, but to Argentina, Switzerland, France, the USA. At the time this was the privilege of the privileges, a window into a wonderful world, accessible only to the select few. Looking back at that time today it's difficult to imagine how closed a society the Soviet Union was in the early fifties of the last century and how great the contrast was with the West. For a caretaker's son who lost his parents early and was forced to work from a young age, the contrast was even more striking.

In his youth and later too, Petrosian only ate quickly. Was this a legacy of his wartime childhood in Tbilisi, which always remained in him and was often recalled? Possibly.

He was indifferent to alcohol, though. On rare occasions he might allow himself a glass of wine or a shot of brandy. Once at a restaurant on Lake Sevan in Armenia he asked for a cup of tea. The waiter started speaking Russian in amazement: 'What's the matter? Are you seeck?' It turned out that they simply hadn't envisaged including any teacups in their inventory, only wineglasses and shot glasses.

In his childhood Tigran had an ear infection, didn't get better, the illness became chronic, and the deafness stayed with him for the rest of his life. He was very self-conscious about his deafness, taking off his hearing aid at the first opportunity. When he was told, 'People wear glasses, it's the same thing', Petrosian didn't agree: 'Well, glasses are different.'

Once he claimed that when he was sitting at a game he only had the hearing aid on if he was playing Black, but there's no way of checking this now. True, Evgeny Sveshnikov recalls that once when he was playing Petrosian at Hastings he got a decent position, and, summoning up his courage, offered a draw. Petrosian silently made a move. Sveshnikov thought that he just hadn't heard the offer. After the game it turned out that Petrosian had heard everything, but decided to keep his opponent in the dark.

He also heard Botvinnik's draw offer in the eighth game of their World Championship match in 1963, but he said nothing and simply made his move. The infuriated Patriarch wrote in his commentary on the game: 'Although this kind of behaviour isn't prohibited by the rules, it can hardly be considered exemplary.'

Kortchnoi said that in these cases he always rapped his knuckles on the

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table. Petrosian reacted if not to the sound, then to the unusual movement, and switched his gaze from his opponent's hand to his face. 'Draw?' Kortchnoi mouthed silently. That was the routine when both grandmasters had normal relations. The most ironic thing about it was that Kortchnoi was also hard of hearing in one ear.

He talked about a grandmaster who had been in the top five for a long time: 'N. plays well, you can't argue with that. He plays well. It's just that he has no tsar in his head!' No one could think that about Petrosian. His paradoxical ideas, his all-encompassing, smooth style couldn't be confused with anyone else's, and we can still learn today from his brilliant games.

'Burrow beneath your enemy, undermine his power from within, destroy his economy, his morale, feed him false information, try to crush him and, if possible, don't come out into open battle', Sun Tzu wrote 2,500 years ago. That was Petrosian's style. 'Safety first' was written on his army's standards.

Petrosian's childhood friend, the Georgian master Tengiz Georgadze, recalled that even in his youth Tigran planned how many points he needed before every tournament so that he wouldn't be left without a prize, would get to the next stage of the competition, above all guarantee a decent showing. Later this became a habit. A sense of impending danger is usually characteristic of older players. Petrosian was an exception – he sensed danger from a young age. Therein lay his strength and his weakness simultaneously. It's a well-known phenomenon: our flaws are the continuation of our merits.

When Constantin Brancusi was asked about the secret of his brilliance, the sculptor replied: 'Making things is easy, what's difficult is getting yourself into the condition to make them.' Getting yourself into the condition where you want to play, coming to an event feeling fresh, developing your appetite for chess, is a no less important art than if you're sculpting or painting on a canvas. Petrosian mastered this art like no one else.

'Before my match with Botvinnik, for physical conditioning I got on skis and went all over the area around the holiday home on them. The ups and downs were particularly difficult for me, many of which were left with the imprints of my back on them. About three weeks before the start of the match I decided to stop working on chess. Skiing, billiards, evening walks and conversations by a warmly blazing fireplace – that's how I got myself in the mood for battle in the forthcoming match', the future world champion said.

Petrosian not only understood the importance of a regimen, sleep, nutrition and walks. He listened keenly to himself: would he be able to play today? Was this his day? Later this became second nature, he started listening to himself more often than was necessary. 'They called me Iron Tigran, but no one except me knows what it cost me to preserve my self-control', he confessed once. 'I remember that in 1961 after a decisive victory in time trouble I couldn't reproduce the game score – my hands were shaking. Since then I've always taken validol with me to games.'

He recalled the first game of his match against Boris Spassky in 1966, in which he saw too late that he could have won a pawn: 'After making my move I took my pulse discreetly under the table – it was up to 140 beats a minute.' Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian didn't want to get into a condition in which his pulse was up to 140 beats a minute, he didn't want his hands to shake after a game, and he often preferred ending the battle rather than getting into that kind of condition.

Once he argued in the presence of young players: 'After a loss, just like after a win, it's useful to make a draw, to restore your internal equilibrium.' 'But you yourself, Tigran Vartanovich,' the young Oleg Romanishin cheekily remarked to him, 'you make a draw

In a restaurant with Kortchnoi before they became sworn enemies

Taking a photograph of the young Kasparov

even after a draw...' Another time he said, 'I try to avoid risk, randomness. If you want to take a risk you should play cards or roulette. By nature I'm typically circumspect, I generally don't like situations that are associated with risk. But I never complained about my combinational vision. Perhaps it's precisely this tactical skill that keeps me from many combinations, as I see a response for my opponents.'

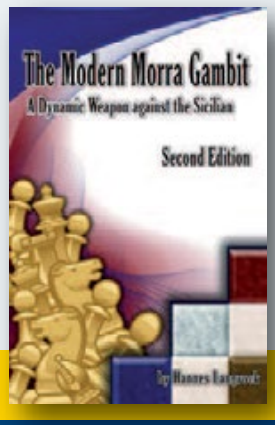
I noticed more than once that in public, surrounded by colleagues, journalists or just fans, Petrosian didn't take the process of analysis seriously. He sprinkled his speech with humorous catchphrases and sayings, and it was clear that he was too lazy to exert himself, to work on looking for not just a good move, but the best one. Especially as the moves he suggested often actually were the best ones. He instantly grasped the essence of a position, found the main melody in it. That's why he was such a great blitz player: there's no time in it for doubt or soul-searching.

I first saw Petrosian in the West in 1974 at the Olympiad in Nice. By that time I had been living in Amsterdam for two years already and had adopted a few Dutch habits, in particular, the complete contempt for clothing that was typical in those days. Seeing me in some pair of worn jeans, Petrosian, shaking his head and screwing up his eyes, with his characteristic imitation surprise pronounced: 'I get the impression that you brought those trousers from the Soviet Union.'

We also played our first game in Nice. In the Catalan Opening I got an advantage and was thinking about my next move. Suddenly Petrosian leaned over the board and quietly said, 'I offer a draw.' I didn't know yet that this was his usual style – offering a draw on his opponent's move – and I was slightly taken aback, but under pressure from his authority and the giant difference in our Elo points at the time, I agreed.

We played our next game at the Interzonal tournament in Biel in 1976. The players had already taken their places, but Petrosian was still walking up and down the stage, his arms folded on his chest. At last the gong sounded. He abruptly went over to his board, quickly played 1.c4 and pressed the clock without offering me his hand. Although our game was played in sight of the authorities – the head of the delegation Viktor Baturinsky had already taken his usual place in the front row of the hall – I don't think that Petrosian behaved that way for that reason. My emigration from the Soviet Union spoke for itself, of course, but I wasn't an open dissident in the eyes of the government, and sporting rituals were always strictly observed in games with Soviet grandmasters. More likely, by remaining distant he was getting in the mood for the game and intimidation of his opponent was a normal part of his routine.

During a game with Petrosian the most varied grimaces appeared on his face. In that arsenal you could see



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irony, surprise, scorn, disbelief, sarcasm. Often his grimaces were accompanied by a dismissive shake of the head. I don't think that he resorted to that kind of ham acting in his youth in the late forties and early fifties, when Petrosian's opponents were the leading lights of the time. But when I saw Petrosian playing, in the last decade of his life, the grimaces constantly appeared on his face. On seeing the latest look of surprise and scorn, his lower-rated opponent sometimes would sometimes start examining the board: did I blunder my queen?

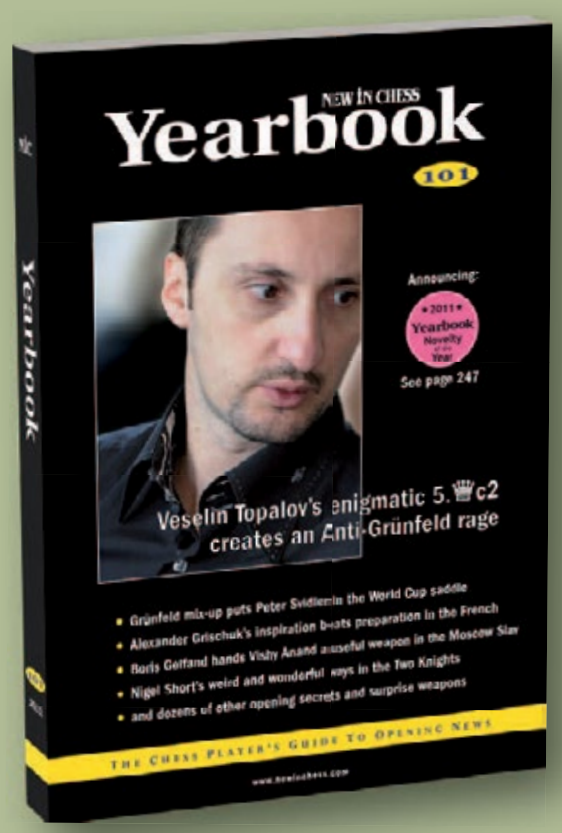
I think this acting was conscious, because towards the end of the game, when Petrosian was immersed in the battle, it completely disappeared, and only the incessant working of his jaw muscles showed any sign of the tension and his internal agitation. I remember the end of his game with a young Kasparov in Tilburg 1981, which Petrosian won brilliantly. His king came under a ferocious attack and Petrosian was so involved in calculating the variations that only concentrated thought could be read on his face. A well-known phenomenon: Maxim Gorky's contemporaries claimed that when he drank and relaxed he became his real self and talked without any Volga accent, which was characteristic of his normal condition.

No real battle materialized in Biel: after playing the opening badly I got into a lost position fairly quickly. Before resigning the game I thought for a while – should I stop the clock and, after signing the scoresheet, just leave while he was pacing nearby with a satisfied expression? But deciding that his behaviour didn't give me any grounds for that, I extended my hand. 'Thank you! Thank you very much', Petrosian whispered with sudden warmth.

A few days later he was playing the Colombian Oscar Castro, one of the outsiders in the tournament. Having underestimated his opponent's tactical opportunities, Petrosian came under attack and got very agitated. Of course, before the game he was counting on the point, but when he fell into an unpleasant position without a second's hesitation he offered a draw three times in a row. This loss for Petrosian delighted Kortchnoi, who was playing in Amsterdam under the Soviet flag for the last time. Calling Biel, he asked me to give the Colombian master a gift of 100 dollars.

By that time they had become sworn enemies. Behind them were their scandal-filled match in Odessa in 1974, Petrosian's harsh anti-Kortchnoi article in *Sovietsky Sport*, and his other pronouncements against the Villain, as Kortchnoi had begun to be called in the Soviet Union after he requested political asylum in the West.

I met Petrosian again at Las Palmas in 1980. Efim Geller was the other Soviet player in the tournament. But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Petrosian had had enough of talking to Geller and, bored, he often started a conversation with me. Sometimes we walked on the streets of Las Palmas and talked about this and that. Petrosian adored record players, transistor radios, tape recorders, any kind of technology. Sometimes he stopped in front of the window of some shop and compared prices and specs on audio equipment. Looking in the window he gave explanations, ran his fingers over them and flicked them with his nails.

'What about Fimka,' he shook his head, complaining about Geller, 'asking the organizers about some kind of paperwork for the Sport Committee – he's always running around, fussing.' Another time he recalled his match with Fischer in Buenos Aires, where he went with his wife: 'I said to her, "Rona, look at the steaks they have here, the best in the world", and she said, "I wish we were at the dacha now having herring and potatoes." It takes all kinds.'

I remember that the thought occurred to me: if that's how he talks about the person closest to him and his bosom friend, what on earth is he saying about me? Well, Sosonko has become a grandmaster, he won a couple of tournaments at Wijk aan Zee and did well at Tilburg, so has he started playing any better? 'That's exactly how my father talked about you', Petrosian's son Vartan later confirmed my assumptions.

When the amount of money that Spassky received for his match with Fischer became public, he knit his eyebrows: 'Usually after winning a tournament abroad we could buy a car, but to buy the whole showroom, that's something...' In that match Petrosian openly supported the American. But here it wasn't so much the feeling, I lost, so let everyone else lose, as what he explained himself: 'If Spassky wins he'll be the monarch, and everything will revolve around Spassky. If Fischer wins, though, a chess republic will be created, and everyone will be in equal conditions.'

By 'everyone' Petrosian meant the Soviet grandmasters, of course. This wasn't completely true – some, with connections and close relations with the bureaucrats, were 'more equal than others'. And among those who were 'more equal' there were the select few who were even more equal. He wrote, recalling his match in 1963: 'Seeing that Botvinnik was coming to the game with a thermos and drinking coffee, I also started bringing a thermos (slightly smaller than the one belonging to the reigning world champion – by "rank").'

Tigran Vartanovich Petrosian navigated very smoothly through the strict hierarchy of Soviet society, assuming that a ladder existed and knowing the place of every person on that ladder. He knew his own too, of course. He once said, 'In my day enormous efforts were required to make a name for yourself.' I think that his extremely negative attitude towards young people, which is encountered in every generation and every era, was founded not only on the fact that in his day establishing yourself on Mount Olympus required, as he believed, considerably more effort. Petrosian thought that young people wanted to take his place on the team, his trips abroad, invade his territory, step into his boots.

Typical of this attitude is a recollection of Boris Gulko. 'The 1975 Soviet Championship in Yerevan was special – both the great Armenian players were in it, Petrosian and Vaganian. I was leading, but in the penultimate round I lost to Petrosian, who did become champion, and I shared second place. When I beat Balashov and Dvoretsky at the beginning of the tournament, Petrosian loudly announced that both of them – players of my generation – had lost their games to me on purpose, and Roshal, Petrosian's court journalist, wrote in *Izvestiya* that journalists were bewildered at how easily Gulko had scored points.

'When he got back to Moscow Petrosian didn't calm down and wrote a statement for the Sport Committee. A special commission to study my games was formed, consisting of Averbakh, Vasiukov and Nikitin. The commission came to the conclusion that Dvoretsky had played as badly against me as he had throughout the tournament, and Balashov sacrificed a pawn, while in other games he didn't sacrifice any pawns. This commission, as Baturinsky informed me, resolved that young players should have a more responsible attitude towards their games.

'Petrosian's statement, and the fact of

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the creation of the commission, and its decision, all came as a terrible shock to me. If a slander is absolutely baseless, it's impossible to defend against it – when there are no arguments, there's nothing to refute. After that incident I couldn't revive myself for a long time and for a whole year I just didn't play chess. I was defeated by my utter defencelessness against the slander.'

Iosif Dorfman also played in that Yerevan championship: 'After his win against Gulko Petrosian was ahead of a whole group of players by half a point. In the last round I was playing Romanishin, who was also in that group. I know for certain that before the start of the round Petrosian called Moscow – Dorfman dispatches Romanishin. They're young, and they're also both from Lvov, everything is clear here. And he suggested that in the case of a Romanishin win both should be disqualified... They say that Petrosian collaborated with the KGB, wrote denunciations. Of Tal, for example. Perhaps that was all true, I just don't know about it. I only know that Petrosian was always a chess idol for me, and as a world champion I rate him higher than Tal, and Smyslov, and Spassky.'

Yuri Razuvaev held a similar opinion too: 'Of all the world champions Petrosian, in my view, is the most underrated. There was a whole array of positions that no one in the world played better than Petrosian. I analysed with him as well as having to play him. In 1974, in the space of an hour, he found 17 only moves in an extremely difficult adjourned position for Karpov against Kortchnoi. Seventeen! And it was all with little jokes and quips, as if he wasn't even making an effort. Prods, tactical jabs, Petrosian saw instantly, no worse than Tal. He found the most paradoxical plans, he had an extraordinary sense of the dynamic.

'Along with that there were things for which it was impossible to forgive him. When something personally offended him, he completely changed. He flew off the handle and got more and more wound up... Letters to the Central Committee, to the Sport Committee and to the highest levels of government were his favourite methods. In that situation relationships didn't matter at all. A friend of Tal, he dashed off a statement about him that Misha had met the son of his coach Koblenz abroad, an émigré. The kinds of problems that letter could have caused for Tal can only be imagined by those who lived in the Soviet Union at that time.'

The composer Nikolai Nabokov, the cousin of the writer, once said at a dinner with friends, 'How he enjoyed sitting at this table. But Vera, she kept him at his desk, she said your job is to write! Without her he wouldn't have written even a tenth of what he wrote.' The same that was said of Vladimir Nabokov's wife can be said of the wife of the ninth world chess champion. Everyone I talked to about Rona Yakovlevna pointed out her enormous role in the life of the Armenian chess genius. Petrosian himself also emphasized more than once that without the support of his wife he wouldn't have managed to become world champion.

They say that when the young Petrosian and Geller were courting Rona she was asked whom she would choose. Rona replied, 'The Interzonal will tell!' The friends were about to play in the 1952 Interzonal tournament in Stockholm, where Tigran came out ahead of Fima in the end by half a point. This is most likely apocryphal, but a typical saying that made the rounds in Moscow was: where Rona is, there's the crown! (The Russian word for crown, *korona*, rhymes with Rona – GS)

She knew, of course, what was said about her in the chess world, but when I asked her directly about this, Rona started to deny it: 'Of course, everything was very organized at home, the food and the regimen. Everything. It's true, but the main thing was still Tigran himself, his fantastic talent. Our neighbour at the dacha was master Beilin. So what, does that mean I could also have made a world champion out of Misha Beilin? I did say to Tigran, and I said it often, play, play

The author with Rona Petrosian in Tilburg in the early 1990s

Petrosian has briefly left the table where he is playing Vaganian

to the end. You see what your opponents can't even imagine. That's how I put pressure on him in Tbilisi in 1959, when he won the championship of the country for the first time. I just pushed him in those days.'

The wife of the ninth world champion was four years older than him. Tigran loved Misha very much, Rona's son from her first marriage, never treating him any differently from his own son Vartan. And Misha always called his adoptive father 'dad'. Petrosian's family was very important to him; he always carried photos of his wife and children with him, showed them to people whenever he could, and was proud of them.

Rona Yakovlevna freed her husband from all cares, creating ideal conditions for his life's task. She knew the 'necessary' people on whom permission to go abroad depended, the ones who could help with the flat, the dacha and a multitude of other issues that the ordinary Soviet person had neither the opportunity nor the means to resolve.

Leonid Shamkovich was very surprised when he visited Petrosian's luxurious flat on Pyatnitskaya Street. 'How did he manage to exchange a modest 13 square-metre room in a communal flat for such fancy apartments?' Shamkovich marvelled. 'Petrosian knows how to exchange bishops for knights. But his wife exchanges everything else!' was Kotov's witty explanation.

Tigran didn't get a real education, and Rona tried to completely patch this hole: she went with her husband to viewings at the House of Cinema, to the opera and to concerts. Composers, artists and writers visited the Petrosians' home. When Petrosian was going for the highest title, and even more so when he became world champion, Rona didn't only conduct herself like a first lady. Sometimes it was up to her which tournament this or that grandmaster would go to and whether he would go to a foreign tournament at all. Quite often she accompanied her husband on his trips abroad, which was extremely rare in those years.

Rona was also with her husband at a tournament in Zagreb in 1970. Fischer's game with Vlatko Kovacevic was played on a tournament rest day: the American was strictly following religious rules at the time and wouldn't play on a Saturday. The grandmasters who were free from play watched the game. Hearing from Kortchnoi about a crafty trap that Fischer had prepared, Rona immediately started worrying: 'Then we have to tell Kovacevic about it!' And she dashed straight over to the Yugoslav grandmaster, who was calmly strolling around while waiting for the future world champion's move.

Unlike other champions' wives, Rona herself played chess and listened carefully to what the experts said. Boleslavsky recalled that one morning after Petrosian had lost a game the day before Rona came into the room where he was analysing something with Tigran and, stamping her foot, demanded, 'What kind of a variation did you palm off on us yesterday?'

At the Candidates' tournament in Curaçao in 1962 she mobilized Tigran and Efim Geller to analyse Benko's adjourned position that he was playing with Keres, although the Estonian grandmaster was on the 'same team' as Geller and Petrosian at that tournament. Preserving their strength over a long distance, they drew their games among themselves, coming to the game only to keep up appearances. But now the priorities had changed and they had to act in accordance with the situation – as if Keres lost, Tigran's chances of winning the Candidates' tournament would become very real.

I often met Rona when she came to Holland in the late eighties and early nineties. We also saw each other in Moscow, or rather just outside Moscow at her dacha, for the last time in the summer of 2001, and her voice with its characteristic intonation stayed on my dictaphone. At first it seemed surprising to me that

she talked about the closest person to her as if she were aloof and impassive. Well, I thought at the time, after all, it's been 17 years since the death of her husband, and time dampens everything, as we know. Now I think that this was only part of the explanation. The main thing, though, was Rona Yakovlevna's disposition. Like the biblical commander grieving and lamenting at the bedside of his sick son, she firmly drew a line between life and death. The biblical hero called the best doctors and ardently begged for mercy from the Almighty, but when nothing helped and his son died he immediately wiped away his tears and got on with his earthly business and duties.

Rona Yakovlevna went above and beyond when her husband was given a ruthless diagnosis, but when it was all over she went back to everyday problems. Two years later *perestroika* began, opening up new opportunities for such an energetic and enterprising person as the wife of the late world champion. Seeing people clearly and understanding the motives for their actions, she felt like a fish in water in the country where she had lived most of her life, but even in the Russia that emerged to replace the Soviet Union she didn't get lost. There's no doubt that Rona Yakovlevna wouldn't have floundered under any system: she was very firmly rooted on the ground, and it's usually from that quality that success in life comes, or what most people consider success.

There were no pictures of Petrosian at her home at all, although previously the entire wall of the study was covered with them. When I asked about that, Rona brought several imposing folders from somewhere, and when we were looking through the photographs, she offered – you want one? Shy, as in my childhood, when I was asked to choose something as a present, I replied, well, perhaps this one. And this one... And I took the photographs that you are looking at now.

Eighteen months later she fell on the stairs at home and her back started aching, then got worse. A few months of tests didn't show anything until the celebrated Evgeny Chazov came to say, we've found the reason for your pain... Rona Yakovlevna died of the same disease as her husband and conducted herself courageously up to the very end.

When he came back from Buenos Aires after his 6½-2½ loss to Fischer, Petrosian stopped in at the club on Gogolevsky Boulevard the next day. It was impossible not to notice the changes that had occurred in him: he had grown thin and the wrinkles on his face were even deeper. 'No, Fischer isn't a genius', Tigran Vartanovich repeated. 'Not a genius at all. Not a genius!'

'I never wanted to become world champion. All that I wanted was to demonstrate good chess.'

He couldn't believe it: how could he, Tigran Petrosian, lose four games in a row? How could such a thing happen? Only a real chess player could understand how strong a blow had been inflicted on the ego of the ex-world champion, who usually lost one or two games a year. He couldn't recover after that match and didn't seriously participate in the battle for the World Championship any more. And by a twist of fate Viktor Kortchnoi was in his way every time.

He said once, 'I never wanted to become world champion. All that I wanted was to demonstrate good chess. In my six years as champion I didn't smoke a single cigarette and didn't drink a single drop of alcohol. My doctor says I shouldn't get too excited when I'm watching ice hockey or football matches, because iron nerves are needed to play chess. Don't get too excited! It's easy to say. But what's the point of life then? What do I get out of it? What does life give me then?'

'I've reached the highest level – I'm reigning peacefully for the sixth year, but there's no happiness in my heart.' Well, the world chess champion wasn't the only person to reign on a throne but not gain either peace or what's implied by the word with a blurred meaning: 'happiness'. Once he was discussing some article for the next issue of *64* with Yakov Neishtadt. 'I think this will be a little incorrect', Neishtadt said. 'Incorrect?' Petrosian retorted. 'You don't understand anything, Yasha. In this life we can't be the ones who are afraid. They have to be afraid of us...'

A lively natural intelligence and narrow-mindedness, common sense and mistrustfulness, openness and suspiciousness, charm and eastern craftiness, the ability to extract the maximum from the institutions of Soviet power, and irony in his attitude towards the reality around him, all this was thoroughly mixed in the complex cocktail called 'Tigran Petrosian'.

But the main ingredient of that cocktail was his outstanding chess talent, his ability to look originally and completely in his own way at the game in which he was the strongest in the world for six years. In his last spring Smyslov dropped by – his neighbour at the dacha. He praised him for his knowledge of gardening, the beautiful flowers on his plot. Petrosian thanked him, then sighed, 'That's as may be, but you, Vasily Vasilievich, are going to the Candidates' matches.'■

Charles Hertan

Forcing Moves

Lasker's Legacy (1)

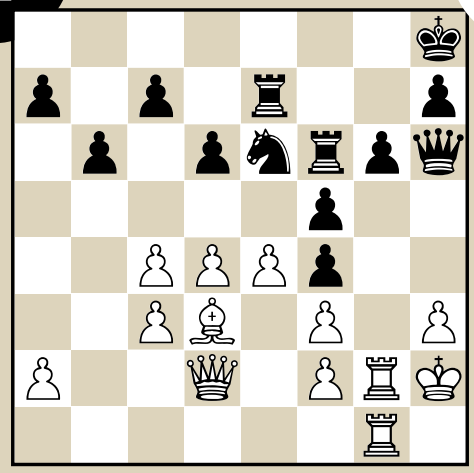
Hikaru Nakamura makes a remarkable comment on his work with Kasparov (New In Chess 2011/6): 'One of the big differences is that (Garry) views chess (...) like, you have to find the best move, period. There's no room for taking chances...' Magnus Carlsen is then cited as saying that the key to top-level play is 'psychological warfare with some little tricks', rather than 'the scientific search for the best approaches'. These telling lines reveal a generation gap. The Soviet School ruled the 20th century with deep, systematic preparation. Its analytical 'machine' produced new heights of chess 'science'. The search for chess truth was integral to success. Today, scientific 'truths' beyond imagining are available to anyone with 100 euros and a keypad. Emanuel Lasker's famous words ring truer to young matadors than Kasparov's 'best move, period': 'By some ardent enthusiasts Chess has been elevated into a science or an art. It is neither; but its principal characteristic seems to be – what human nature mostly delights in – a fight.' Nakamura intuitively grasps what Tal and other heavyweight fighters knew before him – strict correctness is less intrinsic to success than becoming the most feared flesh and blood opponent on earth.

For each problem, the goal is to find the quickest and clearest winning line unless otherwise noted. A 'winning line' could range from checkmate, to being a pawn up with no objective compensation for the opponent.

Level of difficulty:
1-4 stars, 1 is 'easiest' and 4 'most difficult'. The star rating refers to the difficulty of finding all the relevant variations, not just finding the right key move.

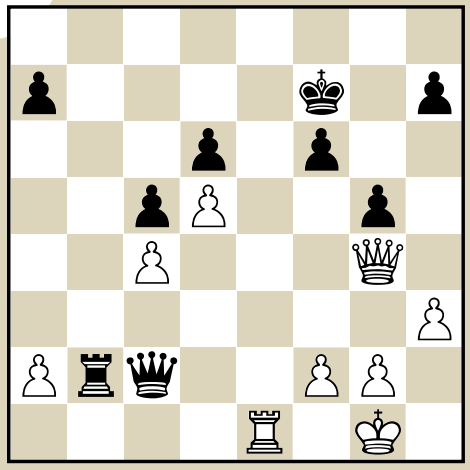
Solutions on page 97

1 ★★☆☆



Black to move and win

2 ★★★½



White to move and win

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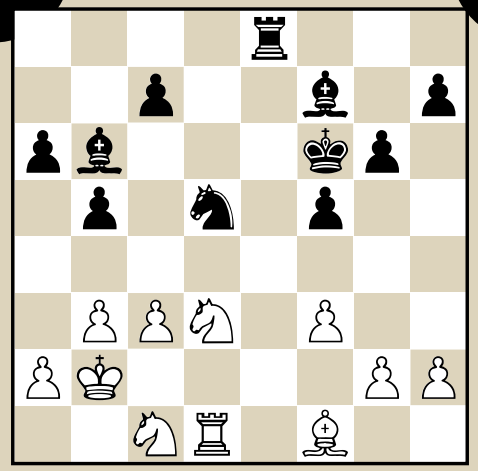
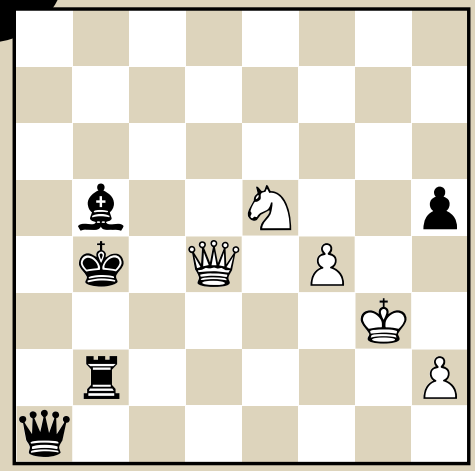


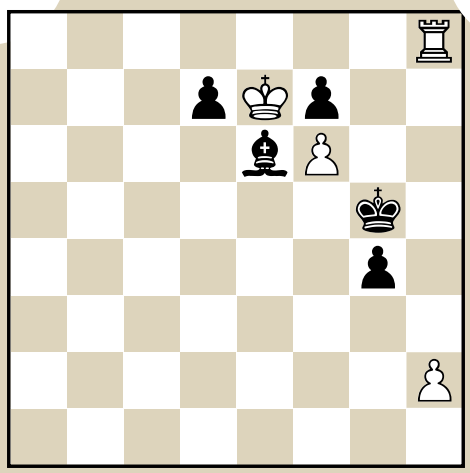
Black to move and win

4 ★★★☆



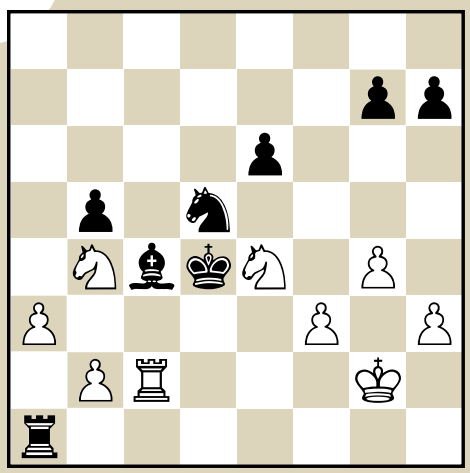
Black to move and win

5 ★★★☆

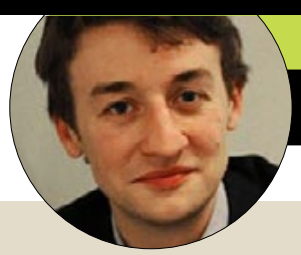


White to move and win

6 ★½☆☆



White to move and win



Luke McShane

The Art of the Composer

Building Castles in the Sky

Over the years, quite a number of people have tried to explain the cultural significance of chess in some pithy sentence. You know the sort – 'Chess is the touchstone of the intellect', 'Chess is a sad waste of brains', 'Chess is a fairy tale of 1001 blunders', and so on. (Just to pick a few from *The Even More Complete Chess Addict*, a book I have mentioned before in this column.) Reading a lot of these together tells us quite a lot about chess, but reading any of them in isolation invariably tells us more about the author than it does about chess, which is why people make these statements in the first place.

However, not many people have had a go at describing the sub-culture of chess problems. In the 1940 essay 'A Mathematician's Apology', the English mathematician G.H. Hardy sets about explaining why it is that he does Mathematics, and what makes this a worthwhile endeavour. Naturally, this partly involves a discussion of aesthetics, and of the enduring nature of the subject. In the course of this, he draws a comparison with chess problems (and don't forget this was 1940!).

'There are masses of chess-players in every civilized country – in Russia, almost the whole educated population; and every chess-player can recognize and appreciate a "beautiful" game or problem. Yet a chess problem is simply an exercise in pure mathematics (a game not entirely, since psychology also plays a part), and everyone who calls a problem "beautiful" is applauding mathematical beauty, even if it is a beauty of a comparatively lowly kind. Chess problems are the hymn-tunes of mathematics.'

The hymn-tunes of mathematics! A very nice description. 'Comparatively lowly' might sound harsh, but that is only meant in comparison with pure mathematics, which is a stern benchmark indeed. Chess problems are an exercise in mathematics in the sense that the rules of the game are given to us, just like the rules of arithmetic, and we attempt to derive interesting and surprising conclusions from those rules. Unlike literature, art or music, the rules are not flexible, and there is minimal dependence on events in the real world to provide inspiration.

Hardy goes on to say:

'A chess problem is genuine mathematics, but it is in some way "trivial" mathematics. However ingenious and intricate, however original and surprising the moves, there is something essentially lacking. Chess problems are unimportant. The best mathematics is serious as well as beautiful – "important" if you like, but the word is very ambiguous, and "serious" expresses what I mean much better... The "seriousness" of a mathematical theorem lies not in its practical consequences, which are usually negligible, but in the significance of the mathematical ideas which it connects.'

Although my instinct is to defend the honour of chess problems, I have to admit that Hardy has a point here. For those in need of persuasion, I recommend reading the rest of the essay, which can be found here: www.math.ualberta.ca/~mss/misc/A Mathematician's Apology.pdf.

The fact that chess problems are somehow 'trivial' is a common and reasonable objection. But it is hard to square this with the deep aesthetic effect that they can have. I don't know the original source, but there is a quote attributed to George Steiner to be found on the Internet, which astutely picks up on this paradoxical feature, although not specifically about chess problems.

'The problems [chess] poses are at the same time very deep and utterly trivial. We have no logical-philosophical rubric for this mysterious quality of "trivial" depth, a form of mental life ultimately insignificant – though enormously meaningful – and trapped in a world of mirrors.'

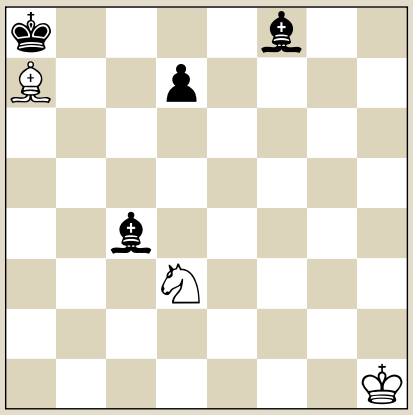
For me, this is a lot more insightful than another quotation attributed to the same critic: '(Chess problems are like masturbation but) playing chess is like making love'. I suppose talk radio fits into the second category as well.

A book which prompted me to think about these things was Jan Timman's new book, *The Art of the Endgame*. I must admit that I felt excited before I had even opened this one. I really enjoy solving endgame studies, but whole books on the subject are relatively rare. The subtitle, 'My Journeys in the Magical World of Endgame Studies' is well chosen, for this book reads like a sort

of tour through Timman's experiences, signposting some of his favourites along the way. The chapters are organised around themes such as underpromotions, stalemates, fortresses and zugzwangs. As regular readers of this magazine must know, Timman is a keen and skilled composer. He has included many of his own studies, and explained how the studies of other composers provided inspiration.

Having set out my stall, I should say that I was disappointed by the fact that a few diagram mistakes seem to have been overlooked by the proofreaders, as has also been indicated on the Errata page of the New In Chess website. In a book of endgame studies, such mistakes can be frustrating for a reader trying to solve the studies, or confusing when playing through the solutions. I preferred simply to read through them, and got a lot out of this book in spite of that, so I hope these errors may be corrected in a second edition.

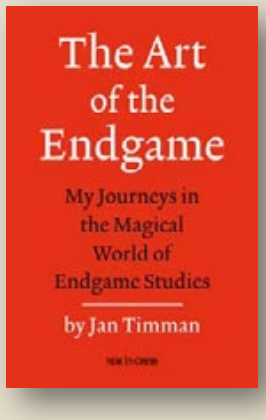
Aesthetically, I have always held a strong preference for studies with a minimal amount of material. It's hard to explain exactly why, but it's common for the more natural settings to appeal to over-the-board players. And, for whatever mysterious reason, there is some aesthetic appeal in an economical starting position. Indeed, the first chapter is devoted to 'miniature studies' with no more than seven pieces. Here is a lovely example, composed by Timman.



Timman 2009
White to play and draw

As they say, if you don't want to know the score, look away now.

A little knowledge is assumed here – two bishops against bishop is a theoretical draw, but two bishops against knight is a theoretical win. **1.♗c5 d6 2.♘e5! ♗d5+ 3.♔g1 dxc5 4.♘d7** The threatened fork on b6 recovers a piece. **4...♗e6 5.♘xf8 ♗f5 6.♔f2 ♔b7 7.♔e3 ♔a7!** This moves is a subtle winning attempt, which makes sense when you consider what White is trying to do – move the king to attack the ♗f5. When the c-pawn begins running, and White captures on f5, he will need to gain a tempo with a knight check to catch the pawn.

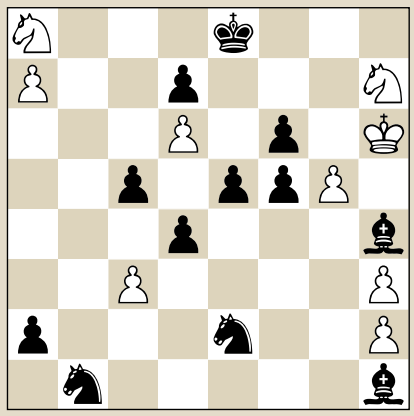


The Art of the Endgame
Jan Timman
New In Chess, 2011

This move sidesteps those checks, so 8.♔f4? would lose, but now White saves his skin with **8.♔f3!!** 8.♔f4? c4 9.♔e3 ♔b6 and the king is in time to chaperone the pawn. **8...c4 9.♔f4 c3 10.♔e3** and White follows up with ♘d7/♘e6, with an easy draw.

However, it is interesting that Timman doesn't seem to entirely share my enthusiasm for this genre. He states: 'I have composed a modest number of miniature studies myself; it is not easy to build in enough points and finesses with so little material.' In some ways, such things are simply a matter of taste, but as we shall see, reading this book really gave me a feel for why more material really does allow for more possibilities.

Endgame studies have given rise to their own jargon, as the themes which they exhibit acquire names, and other composers try to incorporate and combine them in original ways. One of the motifs which Timman looks at is called the 'Plachutta theme' after the Austrian composer who invented it in 1858. For example, a black queen on c4 and a bishop on e4 prevent white pawns on a7 and g7 from promoting. But White advances d4-d5!, and after either capture a pawn can be forced home. A neat geometric idea, but surely once you have seen it once, you've seen them all? Apparently not – this stunning example gave me a sense of enormous well-being.

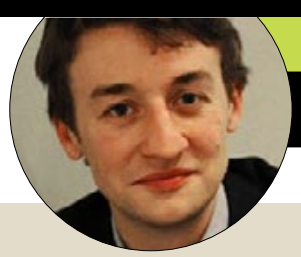


Rusinek, 'Problem' 1976
White to play and win

1.♘c7+ ♔d8 2.g6 Otherwise White is hopelessly behind in material. **2...a1♕ 3.g7 ♕a2 4.c4! ♕xc4 5.♘d5!!** The Plachutta theme. **5...♕c1+ 6.♘f4! ♕g1** 6...♕xf4+ 7.♔g6 leaves Black with no checks available on the g-file (so 6.♘e3 would not have sufficed). **7.♘g2!!** Timman calls this the second Plachutta, though it reminds me more of a Novotny (a related theme which he also discusses in detail). In any case, out of the chaotic initial diagram the result is a scarcely believable repetition after **7...♕c1+ 8.♘f4** etc. **½-½**

I have to admire the composer for even conceiving that the mechanism might be possible, let alone finding a way to implement it.

But as I was reading, I wondered to myself – what is it that I find special in this book? No doubt, it is a fine collection of studies, exhibiting a wide variety of themes. It's great fun to browse, but is there any more to it than that? I went back to re-read Timman's preface, and I'm glad that I did. He writes about his



Through the Luking Glass

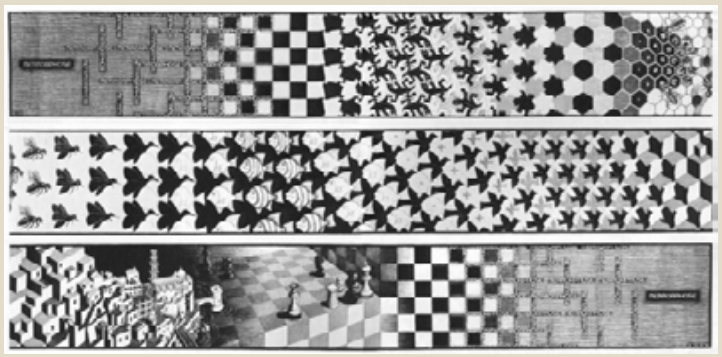
youthful fascination with castles, both their splendour to look at, and to build them from Lego. But this is by far the most revealing passage, and I hope you'll forgive me for quoting a chunk:

'M.C. Escher's *Metamorphosis* starts with black-and-white squares that transform into salamanders. The salamanders become beehives. Out of these, bees emerge, which are ingeniously transformed into birds. Then there are fish, and in the accompanying pattern – birds again.

'Here the metamorphosis arrives at things made by human hands. The new birds transform into blocks. Out of these, houses in a South-Italian town are formed. Now the systematic pattern of forms is broken. A bridge connects the town with a chessboard. On a3 is a white rook, which also exists in the other reality. On the chessboard, a position is depicted where White perishes due to a smothered mate. And then Escher is back at the black-and-white squares.

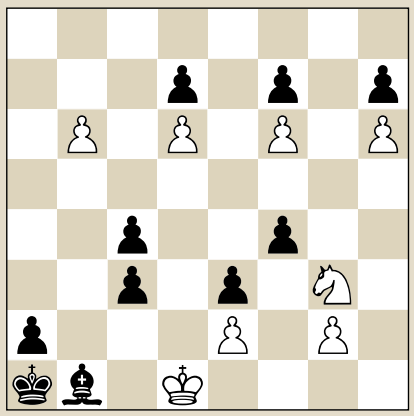
'From building miniature cities to chess: this was a step I already made in my youth.'

For me, this brings to life a whole attitude to problem composition. Many of the starting positions of these studies do look rather unnatural, but some would say that is a small price to pay for the richness of ideas that can be included in a more complex setting. The variations bounce and bubble around, and it can take many adventures before the beautiful finale is reached. My impression is that Timman really likes these layers of 'metamorphosis' to be present in his studies.



M.C. Escher, *Metamorphosis*

You see, I have always looked at chess problems and studies from the perspective of a solver – is it a pleasure for me to stare at this position to try to figure out the solution? But it seems that from the perspective of a composer, things are very different. Reading Timman's examples, I sometimes got the impression of a private conversation being conducted amongst composers, building on themes discovered by each other in new and elaborate ways. It is as though some problems are designed, (and I mean this in a positive way) primarily to demonstrate the composer's skill. For example, Timman has a chapter on the subject of knight promotions. He starts by showing a position he composed in a hotel room in Antwerp in 2010, White is to play and mate in 13:

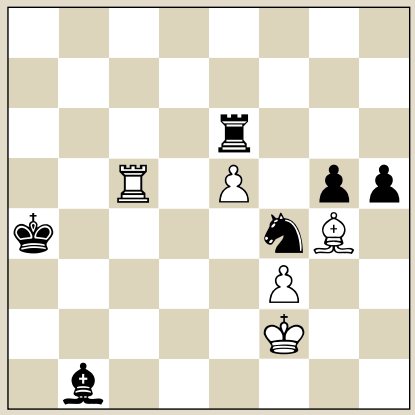


Timman 2010
White to play and give mate in 13

1.♔c1! c2 2.b7 fxg3 3.b8♘! c3 4.♘c6 dxc6 5.d7 c5 6.d8♘! c4 7.♘e6 fxe6 8.f7 e5 9.f8♘! e4 10.♘g6 hxg6 11.h7 g5 12.h8♕ g4 13.♕xc3 Mate

A pretty line, but Yochanan Afek, another accomplished composer, told Timman that the idea had been thoroughly explored already. So Timman couldn't resist digging into the subject a little more, and takes us on a tour through the history of this concept, where composers had managed to include four or even five knight promotions in a single study. As a final curiosity, he offers a study of his own, where four knight promotions are rounded off by under-promotion to a bishop! And I started to wonder if six under-promotions might be somehow achievable...

Many of Timman's studies are far more elaborate than this next one, but it does have that feeling of a magic trick about it:



Timman 2011
White to play and draw

Sometimes, the inspiration for compositions can come from practical play. Timman explains that the idea for this study came from the finale of the game Vedder-Gagunashvili, Vlissingen 2004. **1.♖c4+** Timman points out that 1.♗xe6 ♘d3+ 2.♔e3 ♘xc5 3.♗f7 ♗f5! gives Black a technically winning position. **1...♔b3 2.♖xf4 ♖xe5** 2...hxg4 3.♖xg4 and White will draw once Black's last pawn is exchanged. **3.♖d4 ♔c3 4.♖d1 ♗c2 5.♖g1 hxg4** Now 6.♖xg4 ♗d1! prevents the exchange of the g5 pawn, leaving White lost. Instead comes something ingenious: **6.f4!! gxf4 7.♖xg4 ♖f5 8.♔f3 ♗d1+ 9.♔e4 ♗xg4** and we are left with a stalemate!

Hardy's objection that chess problems are trivial, in spite of their intricacies, still carries some weight. But problems and studies don't have to be compared with bitesize mathematical theorems. Like an Escher lithograph, or a well-written short story, it can leave us marvelling at just how the composer managed to come up with it. (Timman admits that he spent around twelve intense hours composing his four knight and bishop underpromotions!) In some celestial sense, building castles is rather trivial too... ■

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Hans Ree

Combative Priest

Once again, mental imbalance was depicted as a natural effect of intensive chess-playing, just as a bad back can result from hard labour. A film, a book and the fate of books in general inspired Hans Ree to some rambling observations.

‘No more mister nice guy. Every game, with white or black, had to be played for a win and short draws were anathema. It worked.’

I wondered what the unfortunate people who don’t play chess would think of Liz Garbus’ film *Bobby Fischer Against the World*. It has been shown on television in the Netherlands and in many other countries, obviously aiming at a wide audience. I thought it would be difficult to catch the layman’s interest in a story that centres on a chess match of 40 years ago, but I was wrong. The people I spoke to had found the film fascinating. They admired Bobby and they pitied him, having seen the contrast between the intense youngster and the old refugee on Iceland who confessed with a dour grin that, long ago, Larry Evans had been right when he told Bobby that he wasn’t able to write good song lyrics because he had never really lived.

I also liked the film, with its abundance of archive material that I had never seen before. And of course I remembered that in 1972 the world had gone chess mad, but it was still a shock to see all these American news programs, with the newscaster listing the great news events of the day... ‘but first Bobby Fischer’.

Gyro Gearloose on stage

The Streatham & Brixton Chess blog is a website maintained by a few members of a London chess club, well worth a bookmark and not only because they like to tease New In Chess. They had a series of articles entitled ‘When We Were Kings’, about the happy period when chess was regularly on television and on the front pages of mainstream newspapers, mainly during the 1970s. They close the golden age in 1981, after the last game of the second World Championship match between Karpov and Kortchnoi.

I think our kingdom fell later. The early matches between Karpov and Kasparov enjoyed massive coverage by mainstream media. With Fischer and Spassky, the story had been the rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union. Karpov-Kortchnoi was presented as the struggle between the paragon of Soviet chess life and the independent defector. Kasparov put himself up as the embodiment of change; of Gorbachev’s perestroika and glasnost. Again there was a story for the mainstream media.

As the story could not be kept up ad infinitum, attention faded during their later matches. At the same time, chess computers were gaining the strength to wreck our kingdom. In 1988, Deep Thought shared victory with Tony Miles in an American tournament, ahead of Tal and Reshevsky. The beast had beaten Bent Larsen, the first victory of a computer against a grandmaster. The rest, as they say, is history. When you have a World Champion in your smartphone, the myth of the superior brainpower of human chess champions has lost its power.

The Dutchman Willem Klein, born in 1912, was a wonderful number cruncher. He held a few regular jobs as a calculator, for instance with the Amsterdam Mathematical Centre and with CERN, the Laboratory of Particle Physics in Geneva, but his passion was to perform on the stage. One of his stage names was Willy Wortel (Willy Root), the Dutch name of the Disney character Gyro Gearloose, an eccentric inventor and good friend of Donald Duck. That stage name was based on Klein’s ability to calculate the square root of a 216-digit number within a minute.

Then came the electronic calculators, the 'pocket Japanese' as we called them. For a while Willy Wortel could compete with them on stage, beating them in speed. But of course, after a while the electronic calculators won. Willy Wortel's craft had become as outdated as that of a Samurai sword-fighter in the time of handguns, and his career was finished. In 1986 he was found murdered in his apartment, a crime never solved. Though they are no longer kings in the big world outside chess, compared to Willy Wortel the chess champions have done well in their era of disenchantment.

The usual suspects

Garbus' film was a well-told story, but I think that she should have been more careful in weeding out statements by interviewees that are patently untrue. Edward Winter listed some examples connected with the supposed habitual madness of great chess players.

Anthony Saidy said in the film that Viktor Kortchnoi claimed to have played a match against a dead man and even provided the moves. Not quite true. The moves of his game against the spirit of Maroczy were provided by the medium that received them, and when I asked Viktor if he really thought that he had been playing against Maroczy, he grinned and said: 'It might be true, you never know.' Hardly a claim.

Asa Hoffmann said: 'Rubinstein jumped out of the window because the fly was after him.' There is indeed a Rubinstein story, spurious maybe, about an imaginary fly that bothered him, but even in chess mythology jumping out of a window is not a Rubinstein story, it is a story – truthful as far as I know – about Curt von Bardeleben (and Nabokov's Luzhin).

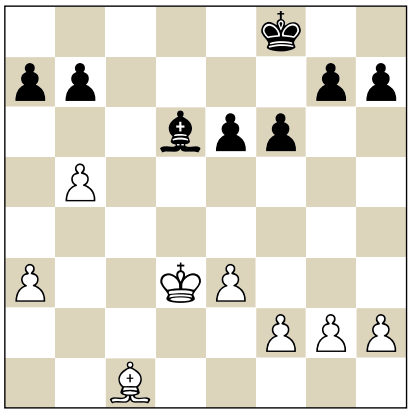
Anthony Saidy: 'Steinitz in late life thought he was playing chess by wireless with God Almighty and had the better of God Almighty.'

Asa Hoffmann: 'Carlos Torre took all his clothes off on a bus.'

The latter two statements are familiar ripping yarns of chess lore, with no known basis in fact. Of course there were also interviews with people who were sober and sensible, for example Larry Evans, but it seems almost a principle of modern reporting that silliness and truthfulness deserve equal hearing in the name of even-handedness and objectivity.

Analytic truth has no chance

And then there was the case of the flashy move 29...♗d6xh2, which cost Fischer the first game in the match against Spassky in 1972.



Spassky-Fischer
Reykjavik 1972 (1)
position after 29.b5

Of course it is unthinkable that Fischer, when he took the pawn on h2, did not notice that his bishop would be cut off, yet some of the experts interviewed tried to suggest this, though they certainly knew better.

Saidy said that Fischer went haywire and did something that only a rank amateur would do. In a later shot Saidy says that he still does not know how this inexplicable move could have happened.

Shelby Lyman calls the move a colossal beginner's blunder.

The interesting thing here is that not only Saidy and Lyman must have known that Fischer's move was far from a beginner's blunder, but that director Liz Garbus probably also knew it. She put in two brief shots of Larry Evans standing in front of a demonstration board. He shows the move 29...♗xh2 and says that Fischer calculated six moves where he should have calculated seven. In the next shot we see Evans executing a white move, 35.♗c1-d2.

Only a chess expert is able to figure out what must have gone on between these two shots. Evans was showing the line 29...♗xh2 30.g3 h5 31.♔e2 h4 32.♔f3 h3 (in the game Fischer played 32...♔e7) 33.♔g4 ♗g1 34.♔xh3 ♗xf2, and now 35.♗d2, which in Evans' very plausible view was overlooked by Fischer when he played 29...♗xh2. I don't think Garbus would have shown this morsel of technical analysis if she hadn't thought it made sense.

For the general viewer two brief shots of a demonstration board are of course overwhelmed by the sensational statements of Saidy and Lyman. Garbus' choice of experts' statements goes further than the modern journalistic principle that truth and falsehood deserve equal hearing. The message to the general audience is clearly that Fischer made a colossal beginner's blunder, which of course adds to the myth. Garbus must have liked it that way.

Ah, well, you know that chess experts will always whine. If it is not about a wrong corner square, then it will be about the insufficient prominence given to a six-move deep technical analysis. Don't let it prevent you from watching the film.

Man of principle

In his recently published book *Understanding Chess – My System, My Games, My Life*, William Lombardy deplores the fact that in Garbus' film many people who were not present at the match in Reykjavik have their say, while he himself, who was Fischer's second, is absent. He was asked to appear, but Garbus wouldn't pay him, so he refused.

Lombardy has a good point. In general, a film is produced to make money, although not *only* if producer and director are worth their salt. It would be natural to pay chess experts who play a part in the film.

On the other hand, it is not common practice to pay people who are interviewed for a documentary film, which is also understandable, as many documentaries could not be made otherwise. I would judge these matters on an individual basis, not along the lines of principle, and in Lombardy's place I would have agreed to appear in the film. From his book it seems clear that Lombardy is a tougher man, not easily inclined to compromise.

The photo that he chose for the cover shows an angry man you'd better not pick a fight with. And indeed, in the book he shows himself to be extremely combative, though often vaguely – vehemently attacking people, but leaving the reader in the dark as to what it's all about.

I have played against Lombardy four times and met him at numerous tournaments. My impression of him was of a jovial parish priest, friendly enough, but somehow unreachable, as if wearing a mental harness. His mode of communication was that of a lecturer, not a conversationalist.

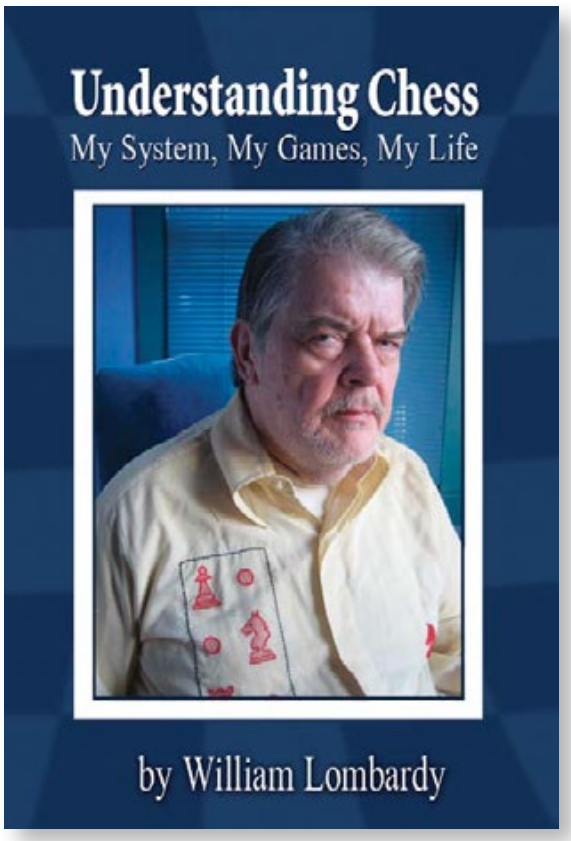
To play the pedant once more, I must say that the book starts off unfortunately with a faulty diagram (a pawn on h3 instead of h4, which makes all the difference in this endgame study). At the end of the book, where the solution is given, the diagram appears again, this time correct.

There are some interesting introductory pages about William's childhood in New York, where he was born in 1937. It would be a good start of the autobiography promised in the title, but it never really comes off the ground, as we learn little about his later years, apart from the stories connected with the games presented.

Soon after his childhood memories there is a chapter about the ills of American chess life in general and in particular of the American Chess Foundation, an institution that was set up to help American top players, but according to Lombardy never lived up to its pretences. But what exactly did they do wrong? Lombardy is hitting hard, but sometimes it seems as if he is chasing ghosts because of what seems a persistent unwillingness to be specific. He doesn't really try to convince the reader that he was right in his quarrels, he just states it.

A priest is only human

There is a long harangue in which Lombardy defends himself against a story in the big book *Pal Benko – My Life, Games and Compositions*, a book that he generally admires. But concerning this story, which he thinks is inserted in Benko's book for no good reason at all, he suspects personal animosity (not from Benko but from an unnamed somebody else) and even anti-Catholic bias.



But of what exactly was he accused? Lombardy writes: 'As for the text of the story in question, I suggest that the reader consults the book to judge for him/herself.'

Consulting Benko's book is what I did, and what I found was an interview with Larry Evans by Jeremy Silman, Benko's co-author. Evans says: 'Lombardy was very tough to beat. After I won the U.S. Championship in 1962, we played a ten-game unofficial match that I won narrowly by 5½-4½ after losing the first game. He made enemies at the board because competition seemed to bring out something ugly in him. He got sore at the church because they wouldn't use him as goodwill ambassador by letting him go to tournaments whenever he wanted.

I still remember him playing roulette during the National Open at a Reno casino while smoking a cigar and enjoying himself immensely. Somehow it seemed unpriestly. I always wondered what drove him to the church.'

My own knowledge of priests comes mainly from books and films, but Lombardy's behaviour doesn't seem unpriestly at all to me. In fact, the priest at the casino (or brothel even), with cigars and preferably a double whisky at hand, is a standard character in Graham Greene land. Lombardy defends himself by arguing that smoking a cheap cigar at the casino is hardly a sin, but I think that what really irked him was Evans' remark about competition bringing out something ugly in him, a remark which he doesn't mention.

Evans wondered what drove Lombardy to the church and so does the reader after finishing his book, for no information about his motives is given. We learn that he was studying to become a priest and that he was ordained. Later, he mentions his wife and son, from which the reader might infer, but not necessarily, that he must have left the priesthood. But that is all. I would have liked to learn more.

Strong language

In our games Bill was always a model of propriety, but he himself describes two episodes in which other people thought differently, as he was accused twice of violating the touch-move rule, once by Saidy and the other time by an assistant arbiter on Iceland.

The latter case escalated to the point where Lombardy, not at the board, but in a pub, burst out: 'If you ever again appear at my table, I will punch you in your %!S#ing mouth.' His spelling,

not mine. In the last round he was paired against Johann Hjartarson, who needed to beat him for a grandmaster norm. Lombardy took a long walk outside on a lava field and only when he was sure that his clock had run out, did he come to the playing hall.

But then he had second thoughts and proposed that they play their game after all, to give him the chance for a norm. Understandably Hjartarson politely refused: 'No, that's all right, next time...'

Lombardy comments: 'Apparently he was less interested in his Grandmaster norm than in obtaining a few more shekels as a result of the forfeited game with me.'

Now really... Shekels, schmekels and a chutzpah at that! What self-respecting man would have accepted Lombardy's offer?

Great results

Somewhere in the book Lombardy observes that he thinks that both he and Evans failed to make the most of their chess talent. That is probably true. Evans became a writer and Lombardy a priest and later a father. He always remained a respectable grandmaster, but did not fulfil the great promise of his youth.

How good he was as a young man! The statistician Jeff Sonas, on his Chessmetrics website, puts Lombardy at number 20 in the world at the age of 23. He had become World Junior Champion in Toronto in 1957 with the fantastic score of 11 out of 11, a feat never equalled in the history of that championship. His finest performance probably was at the Students' Olympiad in Leningrad in 1960, where on first board he beat Boris Spassky and scored 6 out of 7.

In the lion's den of Leningrad, the championship was won by the American team, captained by Lombardy, who had given a stern pep talk at the beginning of the event. No more mister nice guy. Every game, with white or black, had to be played for a win and short draws were anathema. It worked.

The fate of books

One peculiar aspect of this book is its price, a stiff 54 dollars, not including shipping, for which one gets an autographed copy directly from the author, the sole distributor of the book. According to him, '54' coincides with the year 1954, when he started coaching Fischer.

When I wrote 'stiff' I did not mean excessive. On the bulletin board of the Marshall Chess Club Lombardy wrote: 'I hope this will have been the best book written on chess instruction and how best to learn!' If so, he can't be expected to undersell.

'The statistician Jeff Sonas on his chessmetrics website puts Lombardy at number 20 in the world at the age of 23.'

There used to be a mock TV quiz in the Netherlands with silly questions such as 'What's the colour of a car?' and a similarly senseless question would be 'What's the right price for a chess book?' Recently, Alexander Baburin wrote in his daily e-mail magazine *Chess Today* about what he considered the ridiculous prices asked by sellers who were offering his out-of-print book *Winning Pawn Structures* on amazon.com. If I remember correctly, Baburin mentioned prices of over $400, but when I recently checked, I found even more outrageous prices of $1,225 (new) and $1,007 (used – like new). Not to denigrate the excellent writer Baburin, but these sellers must have thought that one fool caught would already make for a lucrative deal and that the Internet is a good fishing ground for catching fools.

Generally speaking, second-hand books have little financial value nowadays. With chess books it's slightly better, but when I sold a few hundred a few years ago, I got about one euro a piece. I own many chess books to which I am attached, but only one, I think, that would command a good price: that by Duchamp and Halberstadt on the reconciliation of opposition and sister squares. I will not part from it any time soon, but let's say that it is a part of my pension fund.

How was it doing? At first I got a painful shock when I saw a copy offered at €17.95, but that was a recent reprint. The real thing was sold at Christie's in 2005 for €6,960, but that was one of the 30 copies that were signed by Duchamp and Halberstadt, and I am not the lucky owner of one of them. At another auction in 2007 an unsigned copy brought £650, and at the moment a Belgian bookseller is offering it for €1,250. OK, I'll let it grow for some time.

And my own books, did they still have value second hand? I found nothing spectacular, but one collection of my non-chess columns from 1989 was offered at amazon.com for $58.25. Four dollars better than Bill Lombardy, it occurred to me. I'll still be competitive in the grave.

And lo and behold, on amazon.co.uk I found the same little book offered for £69.98, which comes to about $150. Nothing like Baburin's *Winning Pawn Structures*, but still quite satisfying.

One day I'm sure Lombardy's book will surpass mine in price. Buy it, not for this reason, but just because it's an interesting account of the career of a great player. ■

Jan Timman

Old tradition, youngest winner ever

The New Year tournament in Reggio Emilia has a long and venerable tradition. In the summer of 1968, when the first modest open tournament in Biel was held, 11 tournaments had already been played in Northern Italy. Only Hastings and Wijk aan Zee have a longer tradition.

Twenty-seven years ago, halfway its history thus far, I played in the 27th Reggio tournament. It was anything but an easy tournament. We played to an unusual time-control: 50 moves in three hours. It felt as if you had oceans of time, but in the end it led to the most blood-curdling time-trouble scenes you could possibly imagine. As far as I know, the experiment has never been repeated.

If the games had not been decided after 50 moves, they were adjourned and finished on the day before the last round. This was also the only rest day; we even had to play on New Year's Day. I have a beautiful memory of Reggio; one evening, Vlastimil Hort and I sat in the hotel lobby drinking a bottle of Brunello and having a talk that would lead to our future cooperation.

During all those years, Enrico Paoli was the driving force behind Reggio Emilia. After the 27th edition he announced that the tournament would continue to grow in strength, and he stuck to his word. The 34th edition in 1992 was at the time one of the strongest tournaments ever held. It was surprisingly won by Anand, ahead of World Champion Kasparov, whom he defeated with black. It would remain Anand's only black win against Kasparov.

'You could feel the ambition bubbling in Reggio from the very start. Small wonder, then, that only 30 per cent of the games ended in draws.'

Even after Paoli's death at the age of 97 in 2005, the tournament remained a strong one. The 53rd edition was won by Gashimov. There was a strikingly low number of draws, even though the Sofia rules were not in force. Gashimov had this to say about it: 'I'd also like to note that it is not obligatory to introduce some rules banning draws or something similar in order to make tournaments attractive. Here there were absolutely no rules, not for being late, not for draws. (...) It seems to me it puts pressure on you when there is a ban on draws, and you start to play more limited chess. More solidly, perhaps. And grandmasters who find a three-fold repetition usually make it at the first opportunity, as there is a risk that you will have to play some stupid position for seven hours...'

True words – to which one can add that the Sofia rules do not help to stop previously arranged draws. On several occasions I saw two grandmasters conjuring up a theoretical move-repetition situation. Those who wanted to do this had no lack of choices.

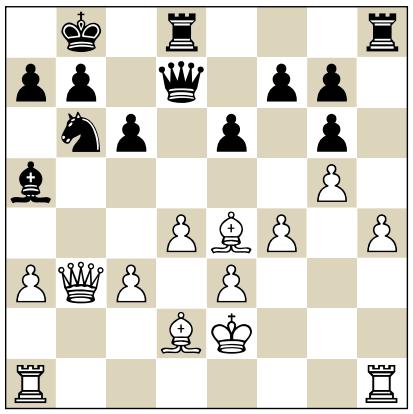
Gashimov wasn't there this time, although he had been invited and signed a contract. Last year's winner had planned to spend the festive season with his parents. Azeri are still not allowed to travel freely, which meant that the Gashimovs needed an invitation in order to get a visa. When the invitation was too long in coming, some lines got crossed. After 20 days of waiting in vain for a reaction from the organizers, Gashimov's brother Sarkhan, who acts as his manager, sent them an urgent message about the visas. As he had made a reference to his brother's participation the organizers reacted with a 24-hour ultimatum, which the Gashimov brothers could not immediately react to as they were travelling back from China. As a result the organizers informed the other participants that Gashimov had withdrawn from the tournament and that he was replaced by Alexander Morozevich. Gashimov was shocked by this decision, but could spend New Year's Eve in a Southern European country anyway, as he was invited to play in San Sebastian.

Regarding the choice of Morozevich, the organizers couldn't have wished for a better replacement. Morozevich can always be counted on to get things going. Without him, last year's tournament in Saratov would have been a pretty boring affair.

They had also scored a bull's eye with the other five players. The result:

three renowned players who can regularly be found in the Top-10 (Ivanchuk, Morozevich and Nakamura), and three up-and-coming players who had only recently crossed the 2700 line (Caruana, Giri and Vitiugov). All players were eager to win the tournament. You could feel the ambition bubbling in Reggio from the very start. Small wonder, then, that only 30 per cent of the games ended in draws.

Morozevich won his first two games, as a result of which he rushed to sixth place in the live ratings. The final part of his second win was particularly impressive.



Giri-Morozevich
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (2)
position after 20.♗e4

Black has a comfortable position. Obvious moves are 20...♘c8 and 20...♘d5, intending to transfer the knight to a better square. But Morozevich goes for a sharper approach.

20...f6

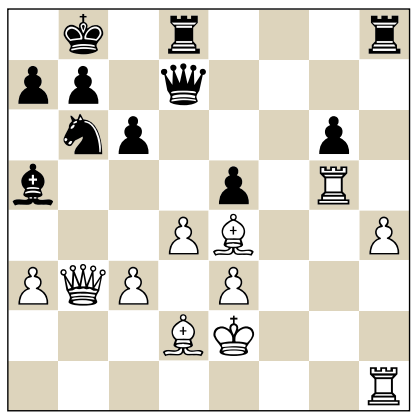
A pawn sac to open the position and exploit the relatively exposed position of the white king.

21.gxf6 gxf6 22.♖ag1 e5

The point of the 20th move. White can hardly prevent the e-file from being opened.

23.fxe5 fxe5 24.♖g5

This, apparently, is what White had pinned his hopes on. The e-pawn is pinned.



24...exd4!

But Black doesn't care. With the bishop sac he launches a frontal attack on the white king.

25.♖xa5

White picks up the gauntlet, lending the black attack wings. Relatively better was 25.exd4 ♖he8 26.♔d3, but even then White's position looks precarious after 26...♘d5.

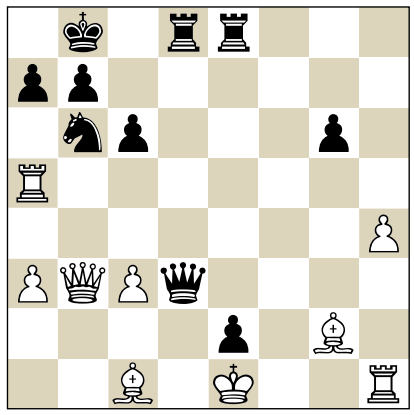
25...♖he8

Morozevich was in time-trouble here, which explains why he settled for the most obvious continuation to promise him a decisive advantage.

With 25...♕g4+ he could have gone for an immediate decision. After 26.♗f3 d3+ 27.♔f2 ♖df8 28.♕d1 ♖xh4 29.♖xh4 ♕xh4+ 30.♔g2 ♖h8 White will be helpless against the black threats.

26.♗g2 The only way to prolong the battle was 26.exd4.

26...dxe3 27.♗c1 ♕d3+ 28.♔e1 e2

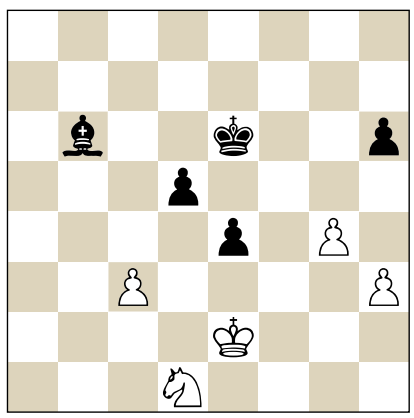


The finishing stroke.

29.♗f4+ ♔a8 30.♔f2 ♖f8 31.♕b4 ♘c4 32.♖xa7+ ♔xa7 33.♕a4+ ♔b6 34.♕b4+ ♔a6 35.♕a4+ ♘a5 36.♗f3 b5

White resigned.

Ivanchuk started the tournament with concentrated and strong play. Manoeuvring with the utmost patience, he rounded up Caruana in Round 3.



Caruana-Ivanchuk
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (3)
position after 74.♔e2

Ivanchuk had been playing this endgame for 27 moves without making any real progress, but now he sets a trap.

74...♔f6

The obvious move was 74...♔e5, but

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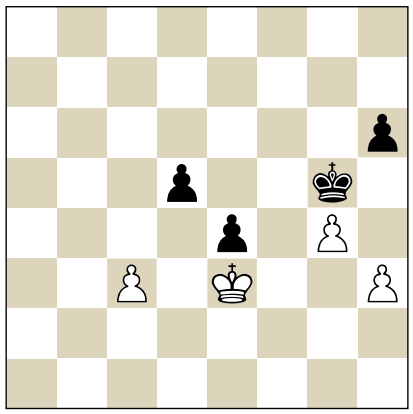
Jan Timman

this would have been met adequately by 75.♘e3.

75.♘e3 But not now! The only move was 75.h4 in order to prevent the black king from penetrating.

75...♗xe3 76.♔xe3 ♔g5



Caruana must have miscalculated somehow; the pawn ending is narrowly lost.

77.♔f2 ♔f4 78.♔g2 ♔e3 79.h4 ♔f4 80.g5 hxg5 81.h5 ♔f5 82.♔g3 ♔f6 83.♔g4 ♔g7

White resigned.

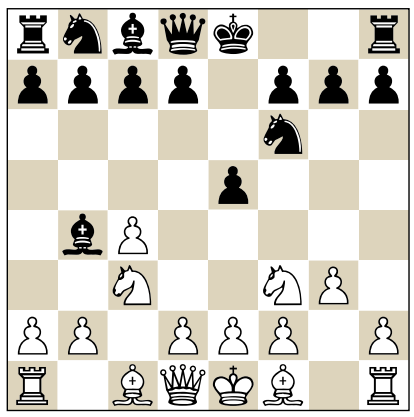
After four rounds the standings were as follows (the football scoring system of 3 points for a win and 1 for a draw was used): 1/2 Ivanchuk, Nakamura 8; 3 Morozevich 7; 4 Caruana 4; 5/6 Giri, Vitiugov 2.

The experienced players were calling the shots, while the up-and-coming men had a hard time of it – a picture that was more or less in line with expectations. But all this was going to change.

In Round 5, played on New Year's Eve, the front-runners met head to head.

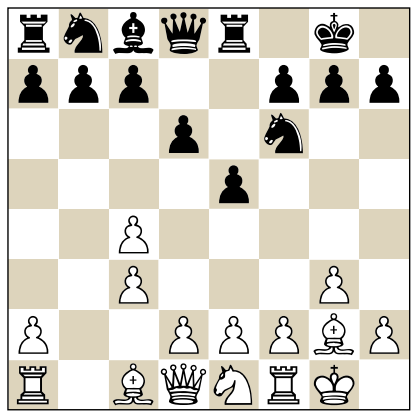
EO 11.1 – A22
Hikaru Nakamura
Vasily Ivanchuk
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (5)

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e5 3.g3 ♗b4 4.♘f3 White's move order had not been very accurate, since Black is not forced to play 4...♘c6 now.



4...♗xc3 Ivanchuk is following a plan that, with reversed colours, is fairly popular in the Rossolimo Variation.

5.bxc3 d6 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.♘e1 An unfortunate move. Withdrawing the knight reduces White's influence in the centre.



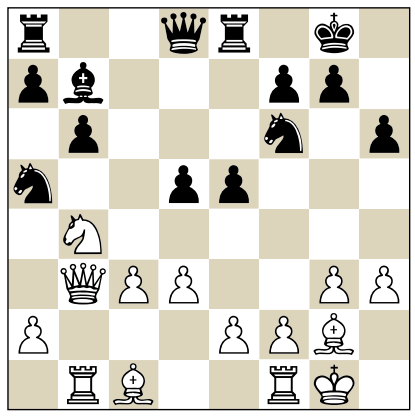
8...c6! The correct plan, which is frequently effective in the Rossolimo Variation as well. Black is going to build a strong centre.

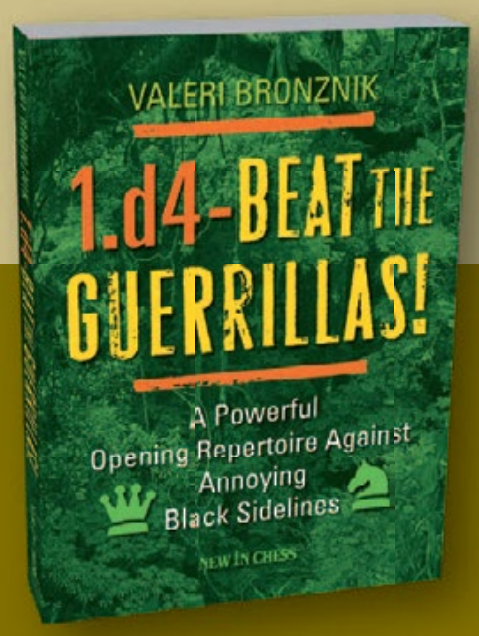
9.d3 h6 10.♖b1 d5 11.♕b3 b6 12.cxd5

Now Black will get a definitive advantage. White should have maintained the central tension with 12.♘c2.

12...cxd5 13.♘c2 ♘c6 14.h3 ♗b7 15.♘b4 ♘a5

Black has reached a dream position.





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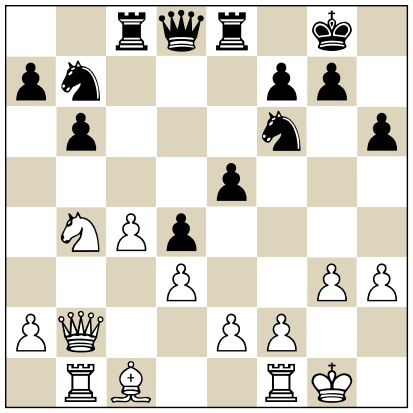
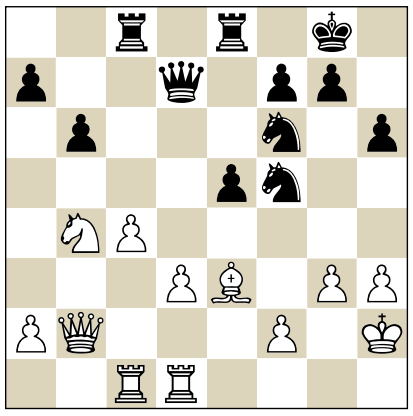
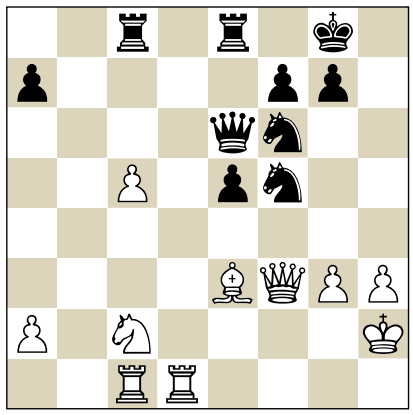
16.♕b2 d4!
Ivanchuk in his element. He is aiming for the strategically favourable bishop swap, while emphasizing his central superiority.
17.c4 ♖c8 18.♗xb7 ♘xb7



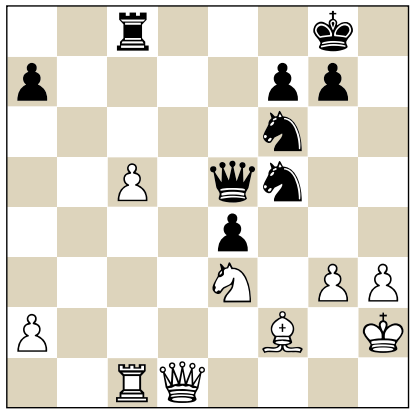
19.e4
Far from ideal, as the pawn swap will lead to all kinds of weaknesses in White's camp. But it is difficult to indicate a reasonable alternative.
19...dxe3 20.♗xe3 ♕d7 21.♔h2 ♘d6 22.♖bc1 ♘f5 23.♖fd1



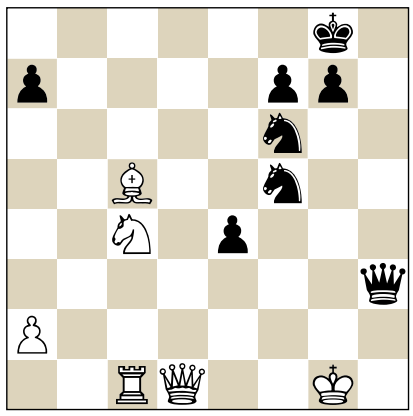
23...h5
Ambitious play. With 23...♘xe3 24. fxe3 a5 25.♘c2 e4 26.dxe4 ♕c7 he could have preserved a clear strategic plus. But Ivanchuk wants to attack, something that the position is ideally suited for.
24.♕e2 h4 25.♘c2 b5
Opening a second front on the queenside.
26.♕f3 bxc4 27.dxc4 hxg3+ 28. fxg3 ♕e6 29.c5
White looks like having some counterplay, but Ivanchuk has calculated sharply.



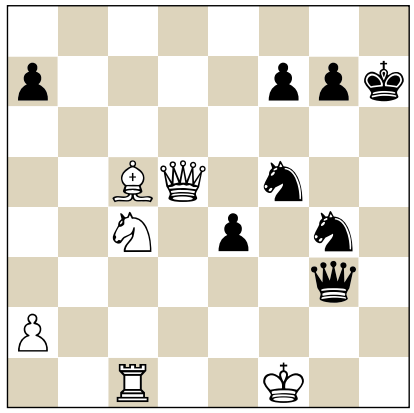
29...♖ed8 30.♗f2 e4 31.♕b3
More tenacious was 31.♕a3, providing extra cover for the c-pawn. But at this point, it was hard to see Black's planned combination coming.
31...♕e5 32.♘e3 ♖xd1 33.♕xd1



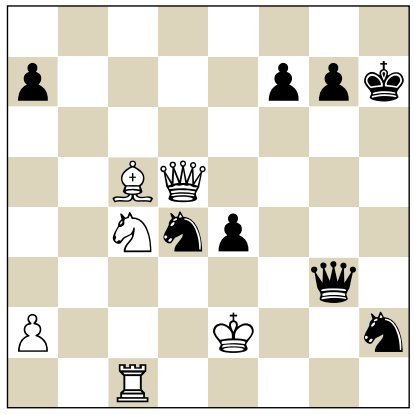
33...♖xc5!
The start of a fabulous combination.
34.♘c4 ♕c7!
The point of the previous moves. White has to take the rook, so that his king loses its protection.
35.♗xc5 ♕xg3+ 36.♔h1 ♕xh3+
The result of the rook sacrifice is clear: with his queen and mighty knight pair Black can launch a winning attack.
37.♔g1



37...♕g3+?
Pity! Ivanchuk was in time-trouble, but this doesn't explain why he forces the white king out of the danger zone. It must have been due to nerves.
The obvious 37...♘g4 would have been Black's crowning glory. The forced continuation is: 38.♕e2 ♘h4 (the second knight is drawn into the attack) 39.♘d2 ♕g3+ (only now) 40.♔h1 ♘f3 41.♘xf3 exf3 42.♕e8+ ♔h7, and White is powerless. After the text the win is gone, and Black will even have to fight for a draw.
38.♔f1 ♘g4 39.♕d8+ ♔h7 40.♕d5!
Making the highest demands of Black.



40...♕f3+
Black had a hidden drawing mechanism here. Only the study-like knight sac 40...♘h2+ 41.♔e2 ♘d4+! would have saved the game.



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

White can take the knight in either of two ways, but both captures lead to perpetual check. If he takes with the bishop, Black will get square d3. What follows after 42.♕xd4 is harder to see. Black then has 42...♕g4+ 43.♔e3 ♕g3+, and the white king cannot escape to d2 in view of a family check.

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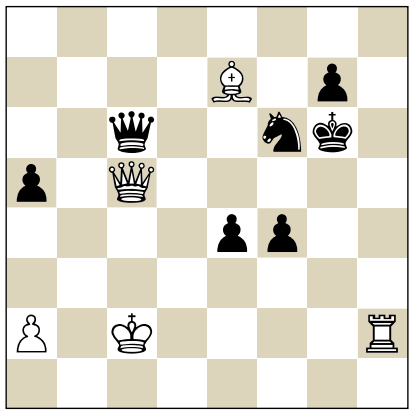
44.♔xe4 ♕f3+ 45.♔e5 ♕f6+ also leads to a perpetual.

41.♔e1 ♘g3 42.♖c2 f5 43.♔d2 ♘f6 44.♕d8 ♘e2 45.♔e1 f4 46.♖xe2 ♕c3+ 47.♔d1 ♕xc4 48.♕d4 ♕b5 49.♖h2+ ♔g6 50.♔c2 a5 51.♗e7 ♕c6+ 52.♕c5



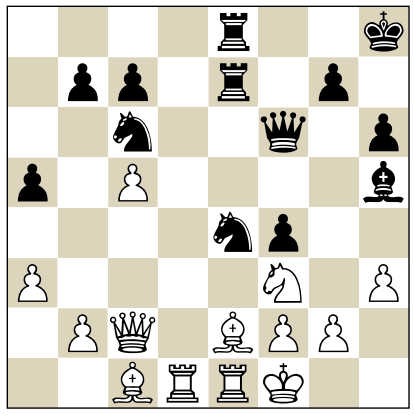
52...♕a4+

Losing on the spot. Swapping queens was no good either after 52...♕xc5+ 53.♗xc5 ♔f5 54.♖h8!. With his rook behind the lines, White has no problem finishing the technical job.

53.♔c1 f3 54.♗xf6 ♔xf6 55.♖d2 g6 56.♖d6+ ♔g7 57.♖d8

Black resigned.

New Year's Day was a rest day – a change compared to the past. Ivanchuk had one day to put this missed chance out of his mind, but he singularly failed to do so. Nor had he been lucky with the playing schedule. It is common practice in a double-rounded tournament to switch two rounds, e.g. Rounds 3 and 5, to prevent one player being White three times in a row and another one from being Black three times. The Reggio Emilia organizers had neglected to take this measure, with the result that Ivanchuk had to be Black two more times. In Round 6 he was unrecognizable against Giri, who therefore scored his second win in a series of four. On New Year's Eve he had disposed of Caruana fairly easily.



Caruana-Giri
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (5)
position after 25.♕c2

All black pieces are optimally positioned. Time for the decisive blow.

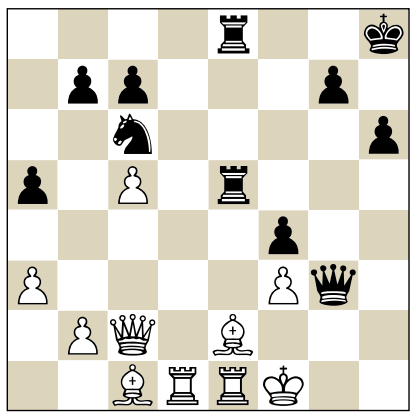
25...♘xf2!

A typical turn.

26.♔xf2 ♗xf3

The point. White has no good way to recapture.

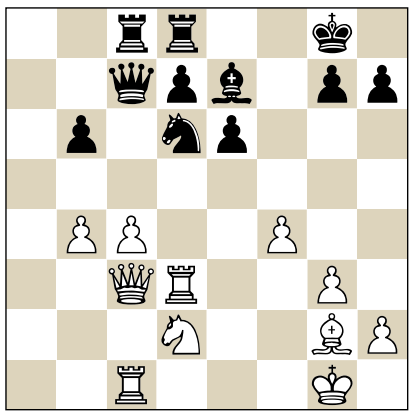
27.gxf3 ♕h4+ 28.♔f1 ♕xh3+ 29.♔f2 ♕g3+ 30.♔f1 ♖e5



Decisive. **31.♗xf4 ♕xf4 32.♕c4 ♖e4 33.♕b5 ♕g3** White resigned.

Even after two wins it seemed unlikely that Giri would win the tournament. He was trailing Nakamura by two full points, or six if you wish, according to the system used. In Round 6, the American beat Vitiugov, climbing to fifth place in the live ratings in the process. It looked as if he was going to win the tournament in glorious style, all the more so because Morozevich took too many risks in his game against Caruana and ended up losing.

Round 7 saw the first short draws. Morozevich-Giri ended in move repetition after a sharp opening, while Caruana-Nakamura was drawn in the early middlegame. This meant that Nakamura had kept his comfortable one-and-half-point (or four-point) lead intact. The most striking aspect of the round was Ivanchuk's blunder against the tail-ender.



Vitiugov-Ivanchuk
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (7)
position after 30.♖c1

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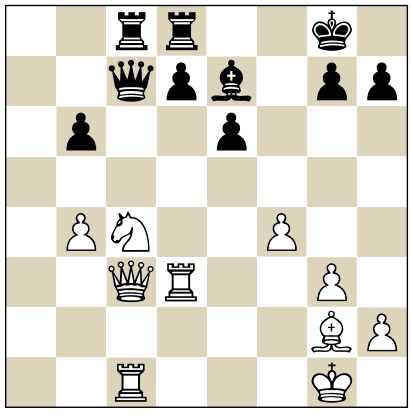
The position is roughly balanced. A good move is 30...♗f6. But Ivanchuk thought he saw a *petite combinaison*.
30...♘xc4?? 31.♘xc4



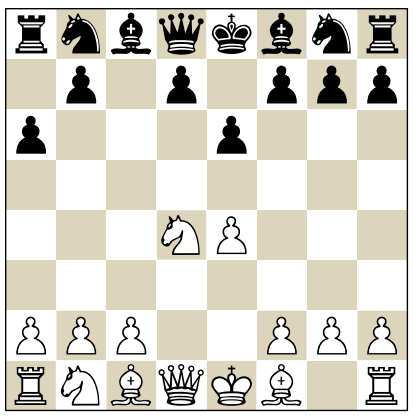
And Black resigned. He had obviously planned 31...b5, only to discover that White can then block the g1-a7 diagonal with 32.♘e3. This resignation perfectly illustrates Ivanchuk's desolate frame of mind. After 32...♕xc3 33.♖dxc3 ♖xc3 34.♖xc3 ♗xb4 White's technical job would have been anything but simple.

By Round 8, Nakamura had obviously tired. He was White against his pursuer Morozevich, in which case you should always be extra careful. But Nakamura must have miscalculated in the opening, because after only 10 moves he was, in fact, already losing.

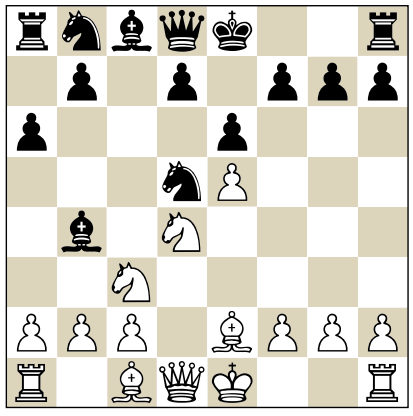
Giri continued his advance with an excellent win over Vitiugov.

SI 41.8 – B41
Anish Giri
Nikita Vitiugov
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (8)

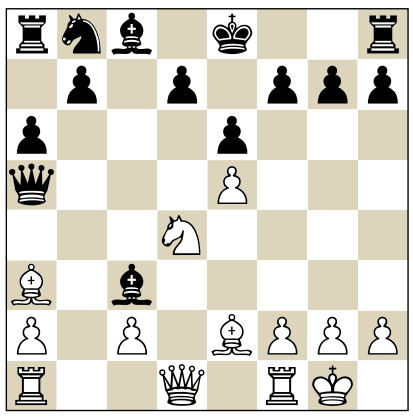
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 a6



5.♗e2 A seemingly modest move, which nevertheless puts some pressure on the defender.
In the previous round, Caruana had got nowhere after 5.♗d3 ♘f6 6.0-0 e5.
5...♘f6 6.♘c3 ♗b4 7.e5 ♘d5

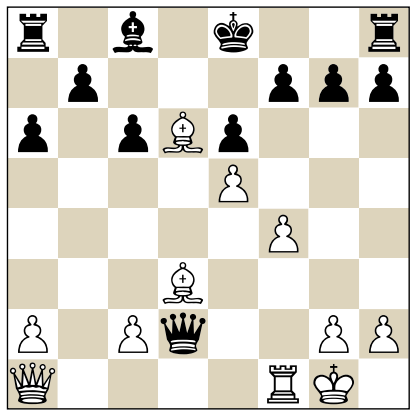


8.0-0 The consequence of White's play. He sacrifices material in order to create attacking chances.
8...♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗xc3
Vitiugov correctly picks up the gauntlet. In Negi-A.Muzychuk, Wijk aan Zee 2010, Black allowed herself to be intimidated and withdrew her bishop to e7. In that case, White can count on a solid opening advantage.
10.♗a3 The point of White's play. The black king is kept in the centre.
10...♕a5

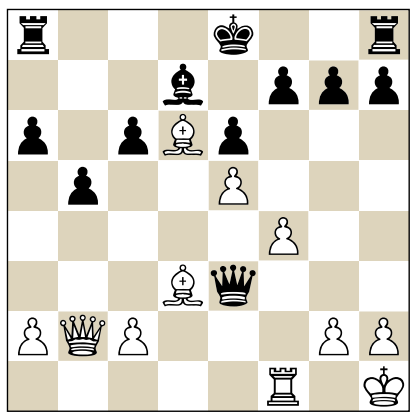


The correct reply. Black does not accept the exchange sacrifice at once, but first sets his sights on the e-pawn outpost.
11.♗d6 ♘c6 12.♘xc6 dxc6 13.f4
In an interview on *ChessVibes*, Giri said that he had rejected 13.♕d3 in view of 13...♗xe5 14.♖ad1 ♗xd6 15.♕xd6 f6, and the white attack falters. After the text Black can finally take the exchange.

13...♗xa1 14.♕xa1 ♕d2!
Giri had underestimated this move during his preparation. The black queen now gets very active.
15.♗d3



15...♕e3+ In his comments, Giri observed that Black could have played ...c6-c5 now or on the next move in order to take his bishop to c6 as quickly as possible, after which the position would be balanced, as witness the following variation: 15...c5 16.♗xc5 ♗d7 17.♕d4 ♗c6 18.♖f2 ♕e1+ 19.♖f1, and neither player has a satisfactory way to prevent move repetition.
16.♔h1 ♗d7
And it's true that 16...c5 is still possible now, after which the play could continue as follows: 17.♕b1 b5 18.♖f3 ♕d4 19.c3 ♕a4 20.♗e4 ♖a7 21.♗xc5 ♖d7 22.♗c6, and White wins back the exchange, after which the position is equal.
There is nothing wrong with the text, incidentally, except that Black will have to live with the fact that his king will remain exposed for a long time.
17.♕b2 b5



18.a4! A strong move. White prevents the liberating move ...c6-c5.

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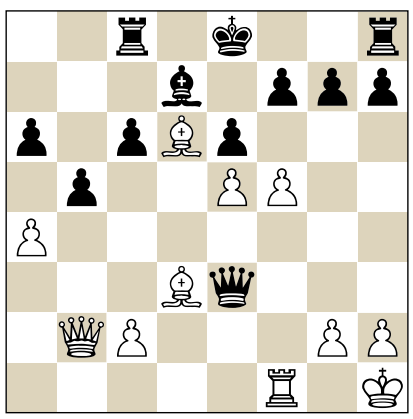
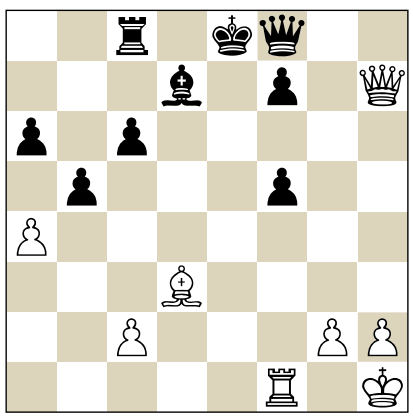
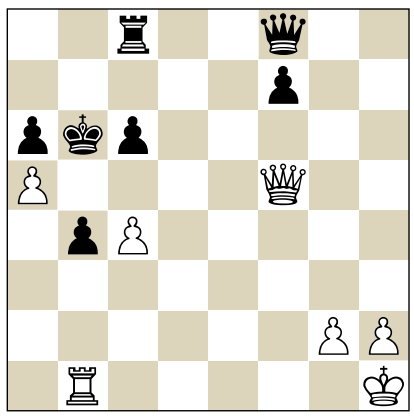
18...♖c8 19.f5!
Playing on two wings. The critical point in the game has been reached.



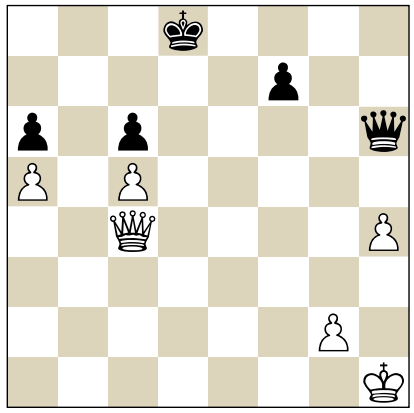
19...exf5?
This shows that Vitiugov was in bad form in Reggio. He wants to return the exchange in order to eliminate the annoying bishop on d6, but paradoxically enough, doing this exposes his king to great danger.
Black should have tried to keep the position closed. His king is exposed, but White will find it hard to launch a direct attack. A good plan would have been 19...h5, followed by 20...h4, after which the rook can be mobilized via the h-file and Black's position certainly isn't bad.
20.e6 ♕xe6 21.♕xg7 ♕xd6 22.♕xh8+ ♕f8 23.♕xh7



Now Black's foremost f-pawn will also fall, after which the material balance will have been restored. But the black king continues to be exposed, giving White a large positional advantage.
23...♔d8 24.♗xf5 ♗xf5 25.♕xf5 ♔c7 26.c4!
White is trying to open new files in his hunt for the black king.
26...♔b6 27.♖b1 b4 28.a5+



28...♔c7
The wrong king move. Correct was 28...♔a7! 29.♕f2+ ♔a8 30.♕b6 c5! 31.♕xa6+ ♔b8, after which White doesn't have a clear win. The covered passed pawn lends the black position a certain solidity and the white rook will find it difficult to make a difference.
29.c5 ♖b8 30.♕e5+ ♔c8 31.♕f5+ ♔c7 32.♕f4+ ♔c8 33.♖xb4 ♖xb4 34.♕xb4 ♕h6 35.♕c4 ♔d8 36.h4



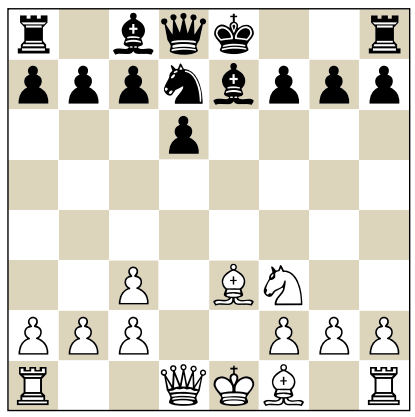
36...f5 In time-trouble, Black misses his chance to fight back. After 36...♕e3 White would have faced a tough technical challenge.
37.♕d4+ ♔c8 38.♕c4 ♔d8 39.♔h2 ♔e7 40.♕d4 ♕h5 41.♔h3 ♕g6 42.♕e3+ ♔d7 43.♕d2+ ♔e8 44.♕f4 ♕f6 45.♕d6 ♕c3+ 46.♔h2 ♕xa5 47.♕xc6+ ♔f7 48.♕d5+ ♔f6 49.♕d6+ ♔f7 50.♕d7+ ♔f6 51.♕c6+ ♔f7 52.♕b7+ ♔g8 53.♕c8+ ♔g7 54.♕xf5
Black resigned.

Giri had now advanced to third place, just behind Nakamura and Morozevich. He will tell you himself how he then defeated the American.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

RG 3.5 – C42
Hikaru Nakamura
Anish Giri
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (9)

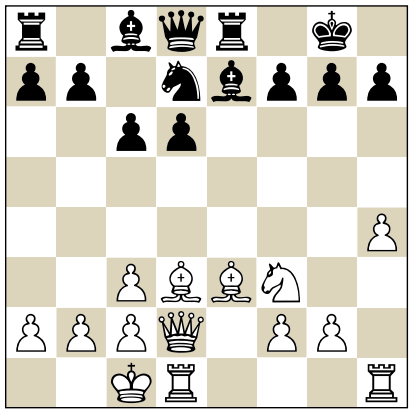
Before this game, I had just managed to get a +1 situation by beating Nikita Vitiugov, and even though I had black in this game and my opponent was the tournament leader, I did have some small hopes to get into the fight for first place.
1.e4 It was no surprise that Hikaru would go for his beloved 1.e4 again, even after his painful loss the day before, which started with 1.e4 as well.
1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6
Normally speaking, this choice of opening suggests that Black is in a defensive mood, but somehow I tend to win more and more games with this backhanded approach (and obviously with a bunch of luck...).
3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3
This line has kind of established itself as the main line lately. As a result, I had spent quite some time swimming in all the variations that can arise and trying to find the best place to get out of this pool.
5...♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 ♘d7!?



Till this game I almost exclusively went for castling queenside (after ...♘c6). In fact, there are two types of Petroff players, those that castle kingside and those that castle queenside. While big guys like Kramnik and Gel-

fand belong to the first category, I previously belonged to the second, accompanied by Chinese experts Wang Yue and Li Chao. Usually my 'team' made draws after some suffering, whereas Kramnik and Gelfand were having more exciting times but occasionally got mated. After having carefully checked that Black is not getting mated (at least not by force) I decided to try to play with fire as well.

8.♕d2 0-0 9.0-0-0 c6 10.h4 ♖e8 11.♗d3

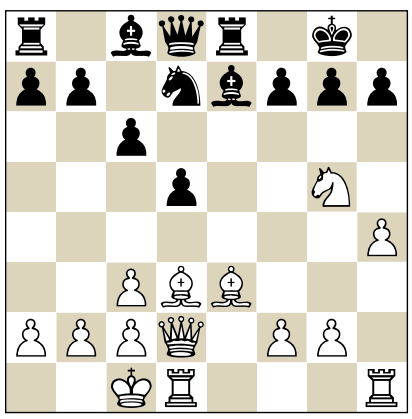


11...d5!?

A new move and a new idea. Previously, 11...♕a5 and 11...♘f6 had been played, both of them by no less a person than Kramnik. However, after both of them, it seemed to me that Black didn't fully solve his problems. I decided to postpone my decision of where to put my knight, as besides f6 it has an interesting career on c5 as well as on f8.

12.♘g5?!

Hikaru decided that there is no difference and that he can mate me in the usual way. Obviously, I will use the flexibility of my knight now.



12...♘f8! 13.h5

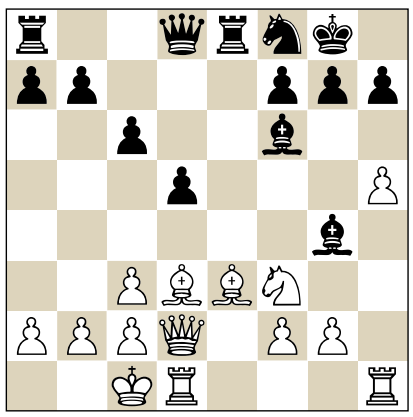
I would prefer 13.♔b1, but this is possible too.

13...♗f6

After 13...h6 14.♘f3 Black can't fully block White, so he will be in some danger of getting attacked by either g4 or maybe even ♗xh6. For instance, 14...♘e6?! 15.g4 ♘g5? fails to 16.♘xg5 ♗xg5 17.f4!.

14.♘f3 Now it seems that Black has won two tempi. Strictly speaking, White can afford it, but he can definitely forget about fighting for an advantage this way.

14...♗g4 Black is developing pretty harmoniously.



15.♖de1

A normal move, played quickly by Hikaru, but I would prefer the more ambitious 15.♖dg1!?.

After 15.♖dg1!? White lacks a clear idea, in fact, so I was even thinking about 15...♖c8 and 15...c5, or even moves like 15...b5 and 15...a5, which don't contain a clear threat yet, but may cause your opponent to sweat a bit. However, instead of 15...♖c8!? or 15...b5!?, 15...♗xf3 is not so good here, as 16.gxf3 leads to a better version for White.

15...♗xf3

I wanted to create some weaknesses, as I felt that I could possibly already try to show some ambition of my own, thanks to my solid centre and pretty safe king, thanks to the bishop on f6 and the knight on f8 (e6).

16.gxf3

Played after five minutes, so the draw offer that followed was no surprise.

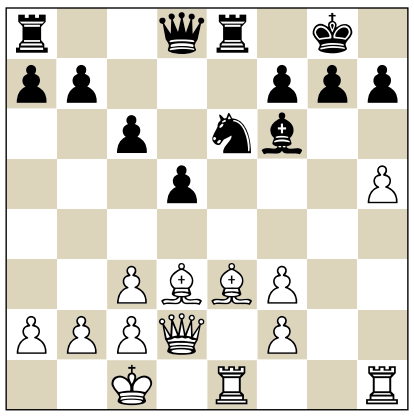
16...♘e6

I took some 10 to 15 minutes to make sure I was absolutely safe here. And also to annoy Hikaru a bit, because for 10-15 minutes he was in a state of uncertainty ☺.

MARTHA FIERRO

What a way to start the new year! Anish Giri celebrates with his sisters Ayusha (l.) and Natasha, and (in front) Georgian WGM Sopiko Guramishvili, the winner of the ladies' group.

Jan Timman



17.f4?!

A very ugly move to me, played with visible confidence. Hikaru was probably trying to reclaim the psychological advantage that he had given me a move ago by offering a draw.

17.♔b1 was better. I can't imagine Black can be any better here objectively, even though the game is complex.

17...h6!

I was happy to play this move, which is only possible once White closes the c1-h6 diagonal. The point is that after f5 I always have the weird, but very effective blocking move ...♘g5.

18.a3

Hikaru was worried about 18...♕a5, followed by 19...d4, but that wasn't my intention anyway, as I thought that it would lead to dead equality and I was already trying to be more ambitious.

18...♕a5

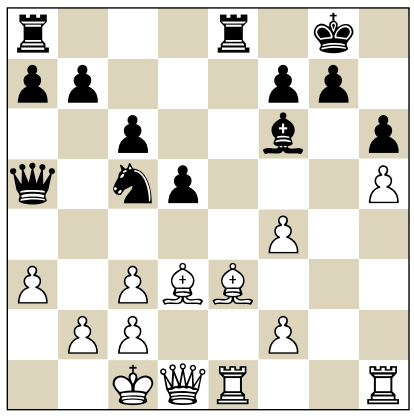
It took me some time to realize that this move is good, as the previous move kind of anticipates it. In fact, White should probably play ♔b1 anyway, I thought, so it wouldn't matter.

19.♕d1

I was getting happier with each move by this point, but White is still solid enough.

19...♘c5

19...c5!? was another way to start something that could turn into an attack.



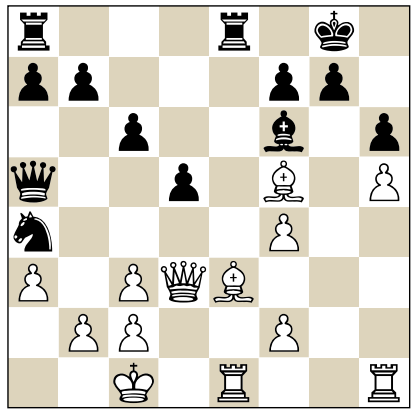
20.♗f5!?

Played after a long think. At first I thought it was too optimistic, but after a long think, I realized that it's not that simple.

20.♖hg1 was another option, as after 20...♘a4 21.♗d4 ♗xd4 22.cxd4 ♕b6 23.b3 ♘c3 24.♕d2 I can't win the pawn due to the ♗h7+ trick.

20...♘a4 21.♕d3

21.♗d4!? was practically a genius move, as 21...♕b5 transposes to a position discussed below.



21...♘c5!?

I think it was the right decision not to grab the pawn. Obviously, we both saw the 21...♘xc3!? trick, and even though I had calculated all the lines pretty carefully, I just didn't trust it and decided that with the time I had, which was less than 20 minutes for 20 moves, I would be better off with a small but stable edge.

Obviously, 21...♘xc3! was the first move that came to mind: 22.♗d2! (22.bxc3 ♗xc3 23.♔d1 d4! just wins, as the bishop on f5 is also under attack after ♗d2) 22...d4!. Initially I stopped here, but after a long think I realized that after, for example, 23.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 24.♖e1 ♖d8 the position is close to mutual zugzwang, as Black has no threat. While I did realize that this

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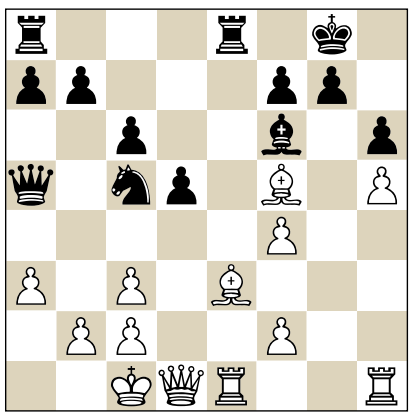
				1	2	3	4	5	6		TPR
1	Anish Giri	IGM	NED	2714	* *	0 ½	0 1	1 ½	½ 1	½ 1	16	2822
2	Alexander Morozevich	IGM	RUS	2762	1 ½	**	½ 1	1 0	0 ½	1 0	15	2777
3	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2758	1 0	½ 0	* *	½ ½	1 0	1 1	15	2777
4	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	ITA	2727	0 ½	0 1	½ ½	* *	0 1	1 1	15	2784
5	Vasily Ivanchuk	IGM	UKR	2775	½ 0	1 ½	0 1	1 0	* *	½ 0	12	2702
6	Nikita Vitiugov	IGM	RUS	2729	½ 0	0 1	0 0	0 0	½ 1	* *	8	2598

3 points for a win, 1 for a draw, 0 for a loss

should be to my advantage, I was worried that there was some strange idea that I could be missing, so I decided to play it safe. The move 25.♖e5!? worried me for a while, but after 25...♗xe5 26.fxe5 ♖d5! which I saw, Black should be on top. He will probably lose the knight eventually, but he will have too many pawns.

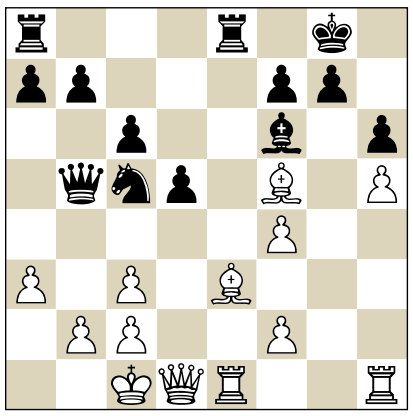
22.♕d1



22...♕b5?!

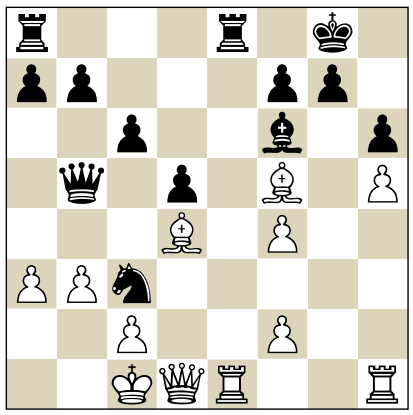
During and shortly after the game I thought this was strong, but after analysing it carefully, things seemed 'a bit' different (as usual).

22...♘e4 was also a good option, but I had missed that after 23.♗d4 ♗xd4 24.♕xd4 I have the very strong 24...♕c7!.



23.♕e2?!

The only move I had expected, but there was an evil trap, which we both missed. Even my cool-hearted Houdini takes a while to find the way for White: 23.♗d4!! (truly an idea of genius, which we had obviously missed) 23...♘a4? 24.b3 ♘xc3



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

25.♗xf6!! (I can forgive myself for missing this one...) 25...♘xd1 26.♖eg1, and although a queen down, White will mate by force: 26...♔f8 27.♖xg7 ♖e6 (otherwise 28.♖h7) 28.♗xe6 fxe6 29.♖hg1, followed by ♗e5 and mate. To my defence I can say that the move 23...♗xd4! would equalize.

23.♗d3 was suggested by Hikaru after the game as the lesser evil. Maybe, but after 23...♘xd3+ 24.♕xd3 ♕xd3 25.cxd3 Black still has a very pleasant endgame ahead of him.

23...♕a4

As I had missed the 24...♕c7! idea after 22...♘e4, I thought this was a nice way to avoid ♗d4.

24.♕d1

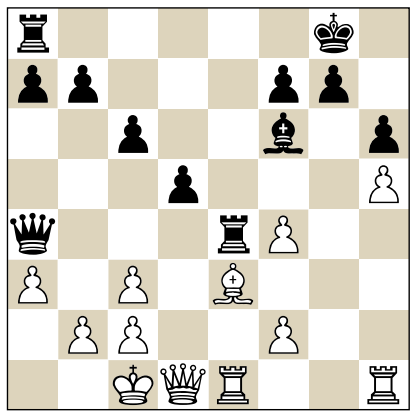
Not needed it seems, but the move I had expected.

24.♖hg1 was stronger, as after 24...♘e4 25.♕g4 Black can't take on c3 due to 26.♗d3, followed by 27.♕f5.

24...♘e4

Now Black gets a small but stable advantage.

25.♗xe4 ♖xe4

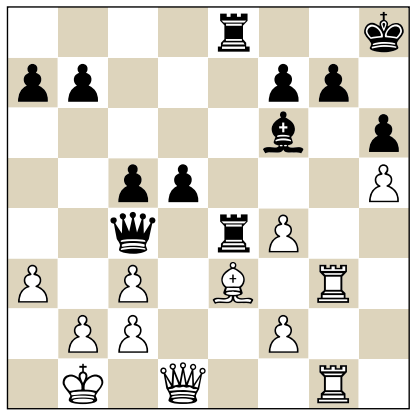


26.♖hg1 26.f3 would be strong, with the idea 27.♗d4 if Black drops back the rook, but it fails to 26...♖xe3! 27.♖xe3 ♕xf4 28.♕d2 (28.♖e1 d4!) 28...♗g5 29.♖he1 ♕f5, winning back the exchange and ending up with a pawn more.

26...♖ae8 27.♖g3

Hikaru tries to annoy me a bit on the kingside, but now Black is already solid enough.

27...♔h8 28.♖eg1 ♕c4! 29.♔b1 c5!



Just in time. White should be careful already, as Black is poised to start some action.

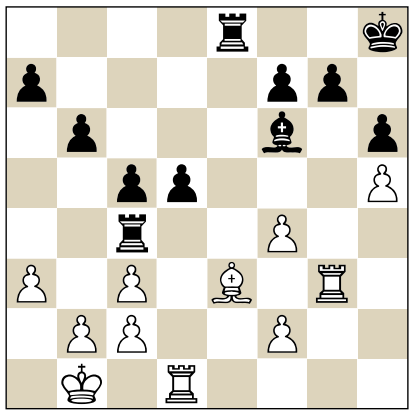
30.♕d3

Accepting his fate. Now it's clear that White is just hoping to suffer and survive.

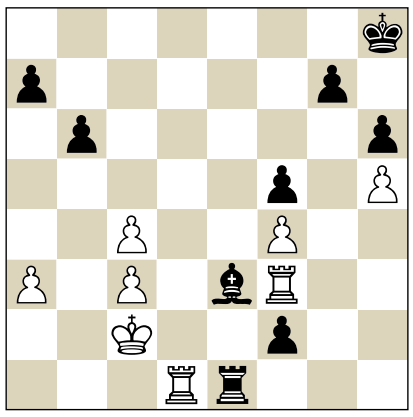
30.♕f3!? was too risky, but at least it stops ...d4: 30...♖4e6 (30...d4? 31.♕g2!; 30...♕b5!? 31.♕g2 ♖g8 32.♗c1) 31.♕g2 ♖b6 32.♗c1 ♖g8, and in view of ...d4, White is not in time with his tricks, which could start after f5.

Jan Timman

30...b6 31.♕xc4 ♖xc4!
It's better to keep the ...d5-d4 resource.
32.♖d1 Probably realizing that ...d5-d4, followed by ...♖e2, would be too much to bear, Nakamura chose to force me to sac an exchange in the hope that the ensuing position will miraculously prove tenable.



32...d4! I saw no reason to refrain from this sequence.
33.cxd4 cxd4 34.b3 dxe3! 35.bxc4 exf2 36.♖f3 36.♖h3 is another way to stop the pawn, but after 36...♖e1 37.♖h1 ♗h4! 38.f5 g5! White is absolutely lost as well.
36...♖e1 37.♔c1 ♗d4 38.c3 ♗e3+ 39.♔c2 f5!



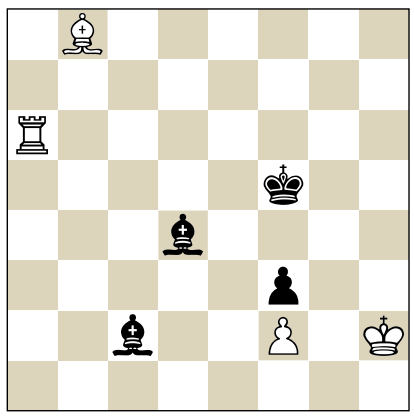
Now it's clear that Black will eventually play ...g6, and the h-pawn will distract White from the f-pawn.
40.a4 a5 41.c5 ♗xc5 And the Petroff Defence had won again.

■ ■ ■

Going into the final round, the situation was nail-bitingly tense: Giri, Morozevich and Nakamura had 15 points, Caruana 14.

It seemed highly unlikely that someone would become the outright winner through a simple draw, yet this is exactly what happened. Giri drew against Caruana in a slightly better position, thinking that he was now sure to finish sole second, since Nakamura was losing against Ivanchuk, and Morozevich seemed to be having the better of Vitiugov in a sharp position. And even if the latter game was drawn, Morozevich had the better Sonneborn-Berger.

But suddenly everything went Giri's way. Morozevich let the win slip through his fingers in time-trouble, and even found himself in an unfavourable endgame.



Vitiugov-Morozevich
Reggio Emilia 2011/12 (10)
position after 46.♔h2

In Reggio, Giri and Nakamura discussed the question of whether this position is theoretically winning, concluding that Black should be able to hold it, since he will always manage to prevent the bishop swap. A correct assessment, it seems to me. But this is what happened:
46...♗d3? 47.♖a4!
Now this problem is irrelevant and Black cannot take the f-pawn. Black's best practical chance would have been to shed the f-pawn in order to at least hang on to the bishop pair. But he went
47...♗e5+
after which it was an elementary win for White.
48.♗xe5 ♔xe5 49.♔g3 ♗e2 50.♔g4 ♔f6 51.♔f4 ♗d1 52.♖a6+ ♔f7 53.♔e5 ♗e2 54.♖f6+ ♔g7 55.♔f5 ♗d3+ 56.♔g5 ♗e2 57.♖f4 ♔g8 58.♔h6 ♗d1 59.♖d4 ♗e2 60.♖d7 ♔f8 61.♔g5 ♔e8 62.♖a7 ♔f8 63.♔f4 ♔g8 64.♖a3 ♔f7 65.♖xf3 ♗xf3 66.♔xf3 ♔f6 67.♔f4
Black resigned.

So this is how seventeen-year-old Anish Giri, the youngest player in the field, with the lowest rating (2714), became the surprise winner of the 2011/12 Reggio Emilia New Year's tournament. In my opinion, Giri's victory was totally deserved. After a bad start he played the kind of chess that Bobby Fischer used to play, showing a well thought-out opening repertoire, an excellent feel for the initiative, razor-sharp calculation and refined technique. ■

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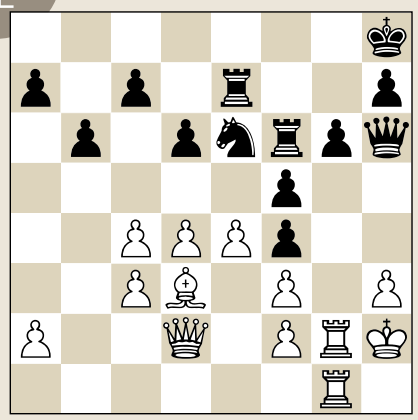
Forcing Moves

Solutions of page 77

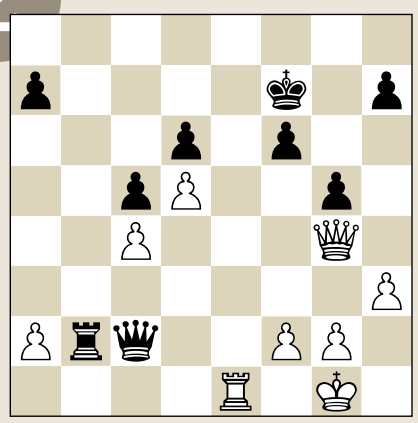
1



Janowski-Lasker
Paris 1909

1...g5! Unleashes a perfectly coiled spring: **2.♖h1** Forced to meet 2...♕xh3+! **2...g4! 3.♗e2** 3.fxg4 ♘g5! is similar. **3...♘g5** Most thematic, though the engines also like 3...gxf3. **4.fxg4 f3 5.♖g3 fxe2 0-1**

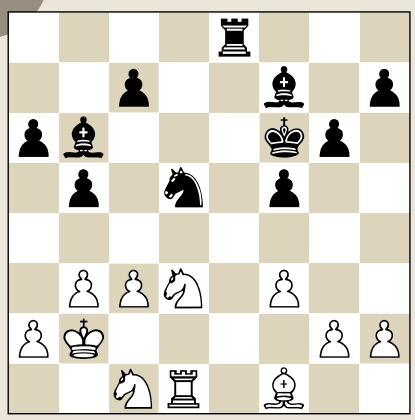
2



Lasker-Von Scheve
Berlin simul 1891

Lasker's deft touch holds up pretty well to computer scrutiny. The only sure way was **1.♔h2!** Meeting 1...♕xf2 with 2.♕h5+. **1...♔g6** More resilient was 1...♖b8! (hoping for the Houdini-esque 2.♕d7+ ♔g6 3.♖e7 ♕xf2! 4.♖g7+ ♔h6 5.♖xh7+ ♔g6=) 2.♖e2!, exploiting Black's holes, e.g. 2...♕c1 3.♖e3 ♕c2 4.♕e6+ ♔g6 5.♖f3+–. **2.♖e7 h6 3.h4 h5 4.♕c8 gxh4 5.♕g8+ ♔f5 6.♕h7+ ♔f4 7.♕h6+ ♔f5 8.♕xh5+ 1-0**

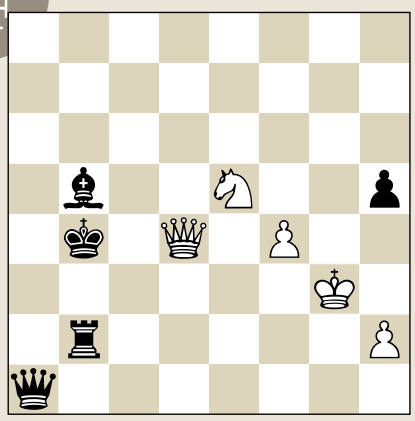
3



Blackburne-Lasker
London 1892

Steinitz is widely credited with discovering the power of two bishops, but his best contemporaries handled such positions with ease. Engines regard any reasonable move as –+ here, but we require something more concrete! **1...b4!** efficiently punched the ticket: **2.♘xb4** Or 2.cxb4 ♗d4+ 3.♔a3 ♘e3. **2...♘e3 3.♖e1 ♘c4+ 4.♗xc4 ♖xe1 5.♗xa6 ♖g1 6.g3 ♖g2+ 0-1**

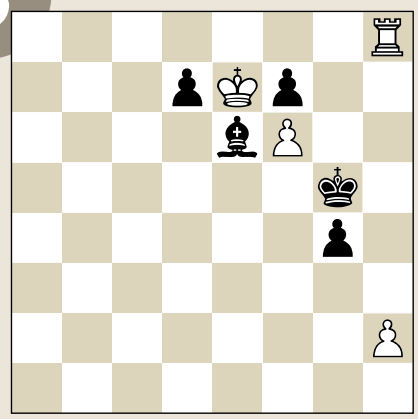
4



Baird-Lasker
New York simul 1892

Lasker was the first truly universal player, at home in any position (even the incomparable Morphy was a little uncomfortable defending, maybe due to lack of practice, since his understanding was so far ahead of his peers!) **1...♔a3! 2.♕a7+ ♗a4 3.♘c4+ ♔b3 4.♘xb2 ♕e1+ 5.♕f2?** A blunder, of course, but White should lose after 5.♔h3 ♕e6+! 6.♔g3 ♕g4+ and 7...♕xf4+. **5...h4+ 0-1**

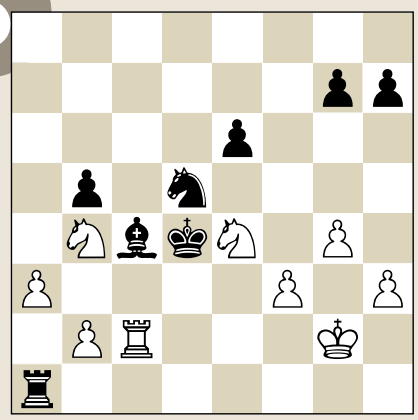
5



Lasker-Showalter
USA 1892/93

There's a problem-like win with **1.♖h7! d5 2.♖xf7 ♗xf7 3.♔xf7 d4 4.♔g7 d3 5.f7**, and 1-0 on account of 5...d2 6.f8♕ d1♕ 7.♕f6+ ♔h5 8.♕h6 mate.

6



Lasker-Duras
St. Petersburg 1909

Like all great champions, Lasker was deadly with an advantage. A typically neat technical knock-out: **1.♖xc4+! ♔xc4 2.♘d2+ ♔d4 3.♘b3+ ♔e3 4.♘xd5+ exd5 5.♘xa1 ♔d2 6.♘b3+ ♔e3 7.h4 1-0**

Hou Yifan

CURRENT ELO: 2605
DATE OF BIRTH: 27 February 1994
PLACE OF BIRTH: Xinghua, China
PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Beijing, China

What is your favourite colour?
Light purple.

What kind of food makes you happy?
Seafood, vegetables and tropical fruits.

And what drink?
Usually it is water.

Who is your favourite author?
So far Leo Tolstoy. Sometimes I like to read biographies of famous people.

What was the best or most interesting book you ever read?
Several. *A Message to Garcia* by Elbert Hubbard, *Window Boy* by Andrea White and *Resurrection* by Tolstoy.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
The Shawshank Redemption.

What is your favourite TV series?
Prison Break.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Chun Wu.

And a favourite actress?
Wang Lore-Dan.

What music do you like to listen to?
Pop and Classical.

Do you have a favourite painter?
Vincent van Gogh. I visited the Van Gogh museum in 2007, when I was impressed by his *Sunflowers*.

What was your best game so far?
Hou Yifan-Vallejo, Wijk aan Zee 2009.

What do you see as your best result ever?
The 2010 Women's World Championship in Turkey and the 2011 Women's World Championship match in Tirana.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Bobby Fischer. I admire his achievements in chess. They are still amazing even today. Also he had his own character.

Is there a chess book that had a profound influence on you?
Not yet. There are many outstanding chess books waiting for me to be read.

What was the most exciting chess game you ever saw?
Karpov-Kasparov, the last game of the World Championship match in 1985.

What are chess players particularly good at (except for chess)?
Maybe logical thinking.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
As individual as the person.

What is it that you appreciate most in a person?
Honesty, kindheartedness and willpower.

What is it that you dislike?
The opposite of the above.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Everyone in the world is unique, so just be yourself.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
From the world of chess I'd choose Kasparov and the Polgar sisters ☺.

Is there something you'd love to learn?
Many things: street dancing, sketching, etc.

What is your greatest fear?
If you are not afraid of death, nothing else will make you afraid.

What would you save from your house if it were on fire?
All humans.

What is the stupidest rule in chess?
I have no clear idea. But I was forfeited in 2008, so I would prefer it if there was no zero tolerance.

What will be the nationality of the 2050 chess world champion?
To begin with I hope that chess will be more and more popular in every country, so that the competition will be fiercer. Personally, I support China.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
I think so. For example, when kids play chess, they can't only focus on the moment; they must also think about the future. It's the same in daily life. Chess also can increase our imagination, improve our calculation skills, etc.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
Chess is everything: art, science and sport – Anatoly Karpov.

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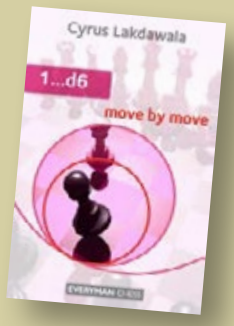

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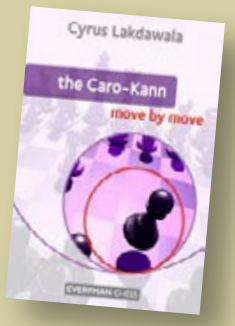

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